

# AWAITING THE ADVENT

## Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow Offering

December 30, 1972

Euro-Africa Division

With the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering overflow for the fourth quarter of 1972, our newest division, Euro-Africa, has plans for two projects. The first is to establish the work of the church in the south of Angola, founding a new mission station in the region of the great Cuenene River. This is a section of the country where we have no work at the present time; so we are praying for your liberality.

The second project is to build a new hospital on the island of Madagascar. Experience has taught us that our medical work can give to the world both spiritual and physical healing. Because of this unique characteristic it has been the hope of the Indian Ocean Union Mission for many years to open medical work on the island of Madagascar.

The president of the Malagasy Republic has endorsed this project by his personal donation of 50,000 Malagasy francs. This shows that the Malagasy people do not expect to receive everything from outside and are anxious to do their part. Land has been purchased on a beautiful mountain site overlooking the city of Andapa in the northern part of Madagascar. The hospital, although simple in structure, will be an honor to the cause of God. Already several Adventist doctors and nurses are ready to serve. All is in readiness awaiting the offering overflow that will make this dream come true.

### Lessons for the First Quarter of 1973

Sabbath School members who have not received an adult *Lesson Quarterly* for the first quarter of 1973 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is "The Christian and Communication." The title of the first lesson is "Channels of Communication." The memory verse is Rom. 10:8-10.

The outline is as follows: (1) Our Lives—A Letter. 2 Cor. 3:2, 3. (2) Our Acts—God-Centered. 1 Cor. 10:31-33. (3) Our Words—Persuading Power. Acts 13:42, 43. (4) Our Prayers—In Tune With God. Rom. 8:26, 27. (5) Our Means—A Source of Strength. 1 Tim. 6:17-19. (6) Total Witness. Phil. 4:9.

The title of the second lesson is "Avenues to the Soul." The memory verse is Isa. 55:2, 3. The outline is as follows: (1) The Ears. Ps. 78:1-3, 5. (2) The Eyes. Matt. 6:22, 23. (3) The Body. Rom. 12:1, 2. (4) The Emotions. Deut. 5:26-29. (5) The Reason. Deut. 4:39, 40. (6) The Whole Man. 1 Thess. 5:23, 24.

# Awaiting the Advent

**FOURTH QUARTER, 1972**

It was the teaching that Jesus would soon come that bound together the first Adventists under William Miller. The power of that doctrine motivated the spiritual forebears of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to proclaim their belief in the face of intense opposition and ridicule. It also motivated them to a new way of life. Ellen White wrote that in her last meeting with her childhood church she bore testimony that a new religious experience had come to her "by the stirring truths concerning the personal appearing of Jesus."—*Life Sketches*, page 46. The truth of the second advent motivated believers in those early days to preach and to live the truth. Does it still have this same power after 128 years?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a body, believes in the soon coming of Jesus. It is assumed that the individual members hold that belief, for to be an Adventist and not believe in the advent is such an apparent contradiction that those who reject it would surely find fellowship elsewhere. The second advent, as a doctrine, is secure in the church. But does it produce the same motivation that was seen in the pioneer days? If it does not, this is the fault of those who hold it and not of the teaching itself. Each individual church member needs to recapture the sense of urgency to prepare for the advent and to do the Lord's work that the pioneers had.

The advent message was derived from the Scriptures. A recapture of the fervor of the pioneers will come from the same source. The beliefs accepted in past years tend to lose their brilliance in a believer's mind unless renewed by fresh contact with the Word.

What signs does the Bible give that Jesus is coming soon? What do those signs mean? Are they still relevant after 128 years of advent wear? What attitudes should those who await the advent have toward life, their fellowmen, their Redeemer, and the advent itself? These are questions that we propose you investigate during the fourth quarter of 1972. This adult quarterly can provide direction for you in that study, but we hope that you will go beyond it. We hope that you will relearn the old truths, discover some new ones, make them your own, and recapture the fervor of 1844. If that should happen on a large scale, we might see Jesus quicker than we think. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

## The Blessing of Daily Study

“Every day some portion of time should be appropriated to the study of the lessons, not merely in learning to mechanically repeat the words, while the mind does not comprehend the meaning; but to go to the very foundation, and become familiar with what is brought out in the lesson.”—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, page 53.

## My Pledge

As one who greatly desires to improve his knowledge of the Scriptures, I pledge myself to the careful and prayerful study of some portion of my Sabbath School lesson each day of the week.

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(signed)

The regular Sabbath School senior division lessons and regular Sabbath School World Mission Report are available free each month in Braille and 16 $\frac{2}{3}$  rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal inkprint. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accidents, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal inkprint publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation, Box 6097, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506.

## Lesson Titles for the Quarter

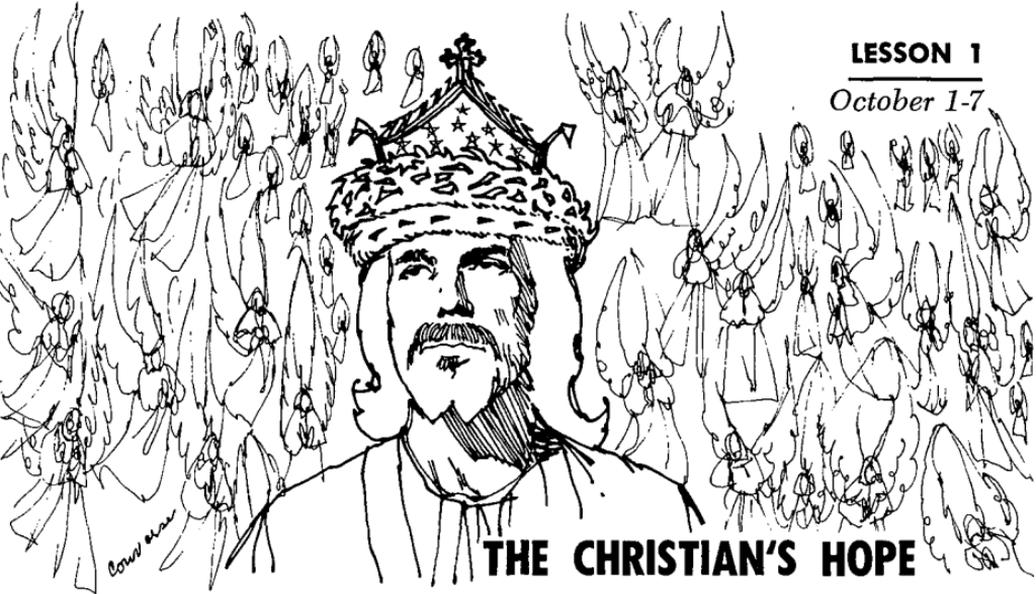
1. The Christian's Hope
2. God's Warnings
3. Signs of Christ's Coming:  
False Religion
4. Signs of Christ's Coming:  
Tribulation and the Gospel
5. Signs of Christ's Coming:  
In the Heavens
6. Signs of Christ's Coming:  
In the Earth
7. The Nature of the Signs
8. Ready or Not Ready?
9. Watching or Not Watching?
10. Faithful or Unfaithful?
11. Delay of the Advent
12. The Church Awaiting the Advent
13. Beyond the Advent

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## THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE

**"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13.**

The moment to which the signs of the times point is often spoken of as the end of the world. But for the Christian the primary event that the signs herald is the coming of the Lord Himself in the clouds of heaven. Certainly, civilization as we know it will close with Jesus' coming, but our hope is not in the end of the world. Our hope is in Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Saviour of all who put their trust in Him.

It is because the second advent is the moment of the return of our Saviour that we call it the blessed hope. It is because our Lord Jesus Christ will come for His people at the second advent that we can love the moment of His fiery intervention in the affairs of this world.

Jesus referred to the second advent as the time when He would take His followers to be with Him in His heavenly home. If we love Christ, we will love His appearing also. For the believer it will not be doomsday, but the fulfillment of the hope to see Jesus Christ face to face and live in His kingdom forever.

"The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour's parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with

joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, the 'appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' was the 'blessed hope.'"—*The Great Controversy*, page 302.

It is the purpose of this lesson to study, not only an event, but Jesus Christ Himself at His advent. At His coming He will stand in a number of different relationships to His people. It is these offices of Christ that form the outline for our study this week.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Redeemer**  
Matt. 24:1,2
2. **The Restorer**  
Acts 3:20, 21
3. **The Life-giver**  
1 Thess. 4:16, 17
4. **The King**  
Rev. 19:11, 16
5. **The Rewarder**  
Rev. 22:12
6. **The Son of Man**  
Matt. 24:30

October 1

**Part 1**  
**THE REDEEMER**  
**Matt. 24:1, 2**

► **What remarks of Jesus prompted the disciples' inquiry about signs?**

**"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."**

"With the overthrow of Jerusalem the disciples associated the events of Christ's personal coming in temporal glory to take the throne of universal empire, to punish the impenitent Jews, and to break from off the nation the Roman yoke. The Lord had told them that He would come the second time. Hence at the mention of judgments upon Jerusalem, their minds reverted to that coming; and as they were gathered about the Saviour upon the Mount of Olives, they asked: 'When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?'"—*The Great Controversy*, page 25.

► **When Jesus completed His enumeration of the signs, what did He say was their significance? Luke 21:28.**

Where the disciples had been concerned about the end of the world and the destruction of the temple, Jesus pointed out to them that the signs He spoke of indicated the approach of the moment of their redemption. Not that the temple would be kept intact or that the world would not end, but the paramount meaning of the signs related to redemption.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How is the second advent related to redemption?**

"When the signs predicted begin to come to pass, the waiting, watching ones are bidden to look up and lift up their heads and rejoice because their redemption draweth nigh.

"When these things are dwelt upon as they should be, scoffers will be developed to walk after their own lusts, saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' But 'when they shall say, Peace and safety;

then sudden destruction cometh upon them.' 'But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.' Thank God, all will not be rocked to sleep in the cradle of carnal security. There will be faithful ones who will discern the signs of the times. While a large number professing present truth will deny their faith by their works, there will be some who will endure unto the end."—"Testimonies," Vol. 5, p. 10.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Desire of Ages," pages 660, 661.

October 2

**Part 2**  
**THE RESTORER**  
**Acts 3:20, 21**

► **What phrase did Peter use to describe the time when Jesus will return?**

**"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."**

At the fall of man humanity lost its God-given dominion over the world. Gen. 1:26. Satan not only claimed man's dominion, but also usurped the place of the Creator and is referred to by Paul as "the god of this world." 2 Cor. 4:4.

The dominion that Satan usurped is to be restored. This restitution has its beginning at the second advent, but is not complete until the earth is renewed after the thousand years.

*"The golden age—the restitution of all things:—1. Restitution means the setting up again of that which has been thrown down. . . . 2. In the universe there has been a great overturning. The course of history seems to be a succession of failures—God setting up, some other power casting down. And, apart from revelation we could not tell what the end of all things would be."*—*The Biblical Illustrator*, on Acts 3:21.

► **What is the initial step in this restitution? Rom. 8:23.**

"Christ assured the angels that by His death He would ransom many, and would destroy him who had the power of death. He would recover the kingdom which man had lost by transgression, and the redeemed were to inherit it with Him, and dwell therein forever. Sin and sinners would be blotted out, nevermore to disturb the peace of heaven or earth. He bade the angelic host to be in accord with the plan that His Father had accepted, and rejoice that, through His death, fallen man could be reconciled to God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 65.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**For the individual Christian what restitution must precede the restitution of the body, nature, and dominion?**

"God created the earth to be the abode of holy, happy beings. The Lord 'formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited.' Isaiah 45:18. That purpose will be fulfilled, when, renewed by the power of God, and freed from sin and sorrow, it

shall become the eternal abode of the redeemed. 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.' 'And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him.' Psalm 37:29; Revelation 22:3."—*"Patriarchs and Prophets,"* page 67.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "The Great Controversy," pages 674-678.

October 3

**Part 3**  
**THE LIFE-GIVER**  
**1 Thess. 4:16, 17**

► **What event takes place at the advent of Jesus Christ?**

**"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."**

"We have a living, risen Saviour. He burst the fetters of the tomb after He had lain there three days, and in triumph He proclaimed over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' And He is coming. Are we getting ready for Him? Are we ready so that if we shall fall asleep, we can do so with hope in Jesus Christ? Are you laboring for the salvation of your brothers and sisters? The Life-giver is soon to come. The Life-giver is coming to break the fetters of the tomb. He is to bring forth the captives and proclaim, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' There stands the risen host. The last thought was of death and its pangs. The last thoughts they had were of the grave and the tomb, but now they proclaim, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' The pangs of death were the last things they felt. 'O death, where is thy sting?' The last thing they acknowledged was the pangs of death. When they awake the pain is all gone." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1093.

► **What unique power does Jesus possess? John 5:25-29.**

The fact that Jesus has life in Himself is really the basis of all redemption. He has the capacity to give this life to His people. John 17:2. If He were not self-living and able to give life to the dead, redemption through Him would have been an impossibility and we would be "of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. 15:19.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Besides giving life to the dead what is the importance of Jesus' self-living existence?**

"The voice that cried from the cross, 'It is finished,' was heard among the dead. It pierced the walls of sepulchers, and summoned the sleepers to arise. Thus will it be when the voice of Christ shall be heard from heaven. That voice will penetrate the graves and unbar the tombs, and the dead in Christ shall arise. At the Saviour's resurrection a few graves were opened, but at His

second coming all the precious dead shall hear His voice, and shall come forth to glorious, immortal life. The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His church, and glorify it with Him, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come."—"The Desire of Ages," page 787.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 644-646.

October 4

Part 4  
THE KING  
Rev. 19:11, 16

► In the symbolic presentation of Christ's coming in Revelation 19 what titles are ascribed to Him?

**"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."**

"When Christ shall come to the earth again, not as a prisoner surrounded by a rabble will men see Him. They will see Him then as heaven's King. Christ will come in His own glory, in the glory of His Father, and the glory of the holy angels. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, the beautiful and triumphant sons of God, possessing surpassing loveliness and glory, will escort Him on His way. Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations. Then every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. In the place of a crown of thorns, He will wear a crown of glory,—a crown within a crown. In place of that old purple kingly robe, He will be clothed in raiment of whitest white, 'so as no fuller on earth can white them.' Mark 9:3. And on His vesture and on His thigh a name will be written, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, page 739.

► What domain does Jesus take over at His advent? Rev. 11:15.

The expression "King of kings" implies that Jesus is King over other kings. He rules those who rule. "The title 'Lord of lords, and King of kings' is used in Scripture of Christ as He returns to earth to vanquish the hosts of evil and to deliver His loyal people."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Rev. 17:14.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what sense can Christ properly be called a king?  
In what sense can He never be called a king?

"With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.' No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. 'His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the

light.' Habakkuk 3:3, 4. As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun. 'And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.'"—"The Great Controversy," page 641.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 641-643.

Part 5  
THE REWARDER  
Rev. 22:12

► At the coming of Jesus what does He do for every person?

**"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."**

"And as the redeemed shall ascend to heaven, the gates of the city of God will swing back, and those who have kept the truth will enter in. A voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, will be heard saying, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Then the righteous will receive their reward. Their lives will run parallel with the life of Jehovah. They will cast their crowns at the Redeemer's feet, touch the golden harps, and fill all heaven with rich music."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 350.

► What is the reward of the righteous? Rev. 22:14. Of the wicked? Rev. 22:15.

The expression "according as his work shall be" in the context of Revelation 22 refers to just two kinds of works, good or evil, and not to a gradation of rewards.

The reward is "according to" and not "because of" the works that a person has done. At the time of Jesus' coming there will be no sinful acts on record for the righteous, for their sins have been forgiven and blotted out. Only the record of righteous works remains. The record of the evil deeds of the lost remains. Thus humanity is divided into two clean-cut groups, each identified by their works, and reward comes in inclusion or exclusion from the city. Thus, "All will be justified by their faith and judged by their works."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 386.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How does sanctification relate to the reward of the redeemed?**

"None who have had the light of truth will enter the city of God as commandment breakers. His law lies at the foundation of His government in earth and in heaven. If they have knowingly trampled upon and despised His law on the earth, they will not be taken to heaven to do the same work there; there is no change of character when Christ comes. The character building is to go on during the hours of probation.

Day by day their actions are registered in the books of heaven, and they will, in the great day of God, be rewarded as their works have been. It will then be seen who receives the blessing. 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'"—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 990.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 665-668, 673.

**Part 6**  
**THE SON OF MAN**  
**Matt. 24:30**

► **By what term does Jesus refer to Himself in relation to His return to earth?**

**"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."**

Throughout the Gospels Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of man, including the references to His advent. The One whose coming we anticipate is not a being foreign to our world and unfamiliar to us; but He is one of us, returning to gather His brothers and sisters together.

"Those who share Christ's suffering and reproach now will share His glory hereafter. He 'is not ashamed to call them brethren.' His angels minister to them. His second appearing will be as the Son of man, thus even in His glory identifying Himself with humanity."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 230.

► **Speaking before Caiaphas, what position did Jesus say that He, the Son of man, would one day occupy? Matt. 26:64.**

"As a man Christ ascended to heaven. As a man He is the substitute and surety for humanity. As a man He liveth to make intercession for us. He is preparing a place for all who love Him. As a man He will come again with power and glory, to receive His children."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1126.

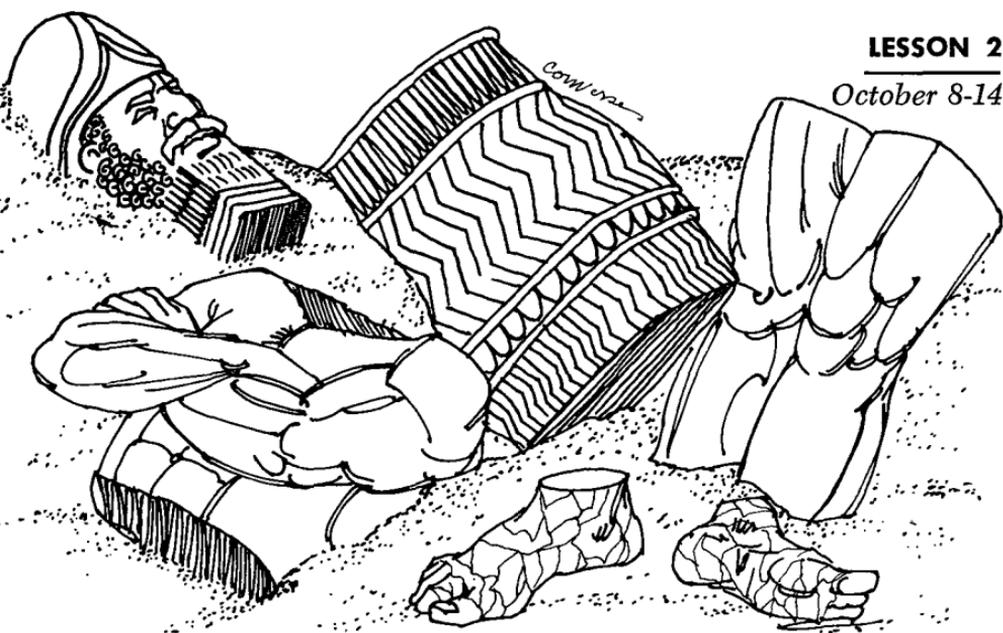
**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What significance does the name "Son of man" hold in relation to the second advent?**

"In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. . . . It is the 'Son of man' who shares the throne of the universe. It is the 'Son of man' whose name shall be called, 'Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Isa. 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His

hand upon both. He who is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,' is not ashamed to call us brethren. Heb. 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 25, 26.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Desire of Ages," pages 210, 211.



## GOD'S WARNINGS 2

**"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." John 14:29.**

This verse was spoken by Jesus in reference to His ascension and the descent of the Spirit. Whenever the future is revealed to men, it has the same purpose—to lead them to believe. In the instance cited here the event was to provide evidence on which to base belief. But there will not always be an opportunity following the event to exercise belief. The fulfillment of warnings given in the past must provide the evidence for belief in God's warnings of the coming of Jesus; for when He returns, the moment for change of heart has already passed. This week's lesson on "God's Warnings" is not meant to be just another look at familiar stories. It is meant to stir our souls to a new and fervent belief in God's final intervention in the world.

"The history of nations speaks to us today. To every nation and to every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being tested by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by

their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes."—*Prophets and Kings*; page 536.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **God Communicates With Man**  
Amos 3:6, 7
2. **A City Responds to God's Communication**  
Jonah 3:4, 5, 10
3. **A Nation Fails to Respond to God's Communication**  
Dan. 5:22, 23
4. **The Greatness of the Lord**  
Isa. 40:15, 17
5. **God and the Future**  
Dan. 2:27, 28, 44
6. **Warnings for Today**  
2 Peter 3:10

**Part 1  
GOD  
COMMUNICATES  
WITH MAN  
Amos 3:6, 7**

► **By what means did God communicate His warnings of judgment on Israel?**

**"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."**

"The secret things,' says Moses, 'belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever;' and the Lord declares by the prophet Amos, that He 'will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.' Deuteronomy 29:29; Amos 3:7. The students of God's word may, then, confidently expect to find the most stupendous event to take place in human history clearly pointed out in the Scriptures of truth."—*The Great Controversy*, page 324.

"All the evils threatened upon Israel will come, but not without the Lord's first warning the people through the prophets. . . . The mercy of God is shown by the fact that He does not bring His judgments upon men until He first warns them through His prophets. He predicts the evil to come in the hope that He may not be forced to inflict it. . . .

"In spite of the fact that Israel had 'commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not' . . . , God proclaims that He will continue to reveal His will to His chosen messengers."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Amos 3:7.

► **How did God seek to keep the people of Judah back from the dangerous path they were treading? 2 Chron. 36:15.**

"In the closing years of Judah's apostasy the exhortations of the prophets were seemingly of but little avail; and as the armies of the Chaldeans came for the third and last time to besiege Jerusalem, hope fled from every heart. Jeremiah predicted utter ruin; and it was because of his insistence on surrender that he had finally been thrown into prison."—*Prophets and Kings*, page 466.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What specific guidance can we find for today in the experiences of Israel's and Judah's rejection of prophetic warnings?**

"In the purposes of God, His plans are revealed to His people so that they might know how to co-operate with them. Long ago Christians would have given up in despair had it not been for the assurance, 'I will come again.' . . .

There were times when the most courageous hearts would have failed had it not been for the repeated assurances of the Lord's purpose to bring deliverance."—T. H. Jemison, "A Prophet Among You," page 43.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Prophets and Kings," pages 296-300.

**Part 2**  
**A CITY RESPONDS**  
**TO GOD'S**  
**COMMUNICATION**  
 Jonah 3:4, 5, 10

► **What was the result of the Ninevites' acceptance of God's warning?**

**"Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast." "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."**

"As king and nobles, with the common people, the high and the low, 'repented at the preaching of Jonas' (Matthew 12:41) and united in crying to the God of heaven, His mercy was granted them. He 'saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.' Jonah 3:10. Their doom was averted, the God of Israel was exalted and honored throughout the heathen world, and His law was revered. Not until many years later was Nineveh to fall a prey to the surrounding nations through forgetfulness of God and through boastful pride."—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 270, 271.

► **What is the principle of conditional prophecy of which Nineveh's experience is an example? Jer. 18:7-10.**

"God changes his mind as man changes his conduct. When man repents of his wickedness and does that which is right in God's sight, the ground of the divine judgment ceases to exist. Always possible is the escape to the Everlasting Mercy. 'In the same place in which you find God's omnipotence you will find his humility.' [Rabbi Johanan.]"—*The Interpreter's Bible*, on Jonah 3:10.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What truth does the story of Nineveh's repentance teach about the coming of Jesus?**

"As the preaching of Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so Christ's preaching was a sign to His generation. But what a contrast in the reception of the word! Yet in the face of indifference and scorn the Saviour labored on and on, until He had accomplished His mission.

"The lesson is for God's messengers today, when the cities of the nations are as verily in need of a knowledge of the attributes and purposes of the

true God as were the Ninevites of old."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* page 274.

"The storm of God's wrath is gathering; and those only will stand who respond to the invitations of mercy, as did the inhabitants of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah, and become sanctified through obedience to the laws of the divine Ruler. The righteous alone shall be hid with Christ in God till the desolation be overpast."—*"Ibid.,"* p. 278.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** *"Prophets and Kings,"* pages 273-278.

**Part 3**  
**A NATION FAILS**  
**TO RESPOND**  
**Dan. 5:22, 23**

► **What was Belshazzar's fatal mistake?**

**"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."**

"Through the folly and weakness of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, proud Babylon was soon to fall. . . . He had known of his grandfather's banishment, by the decree of God, from the society of men; and he was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar's conversion and miraculous restoration. But Belshazzar allowed the love of pleasure and self-glorification to efface the lessons that he should never have forgotten. He wasted the opportunities graciously granted him, and neglected to use the means within his reach for becoming more fully acquainted with truth. That which Nebuchadnezzar had finally gained at the cost of untold suffering and humiliation, Belshazzar passed by with indifference."—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 522, 523.

► **How did God communicate the sentence on Belshazzar and Babylon? Dan. 5:24-28.**

"In that last night of mad folly, Belshazzar and his lords had filled up the measure of their guilt and the guilt of the Chaldean kingdom. No longer could God's restraining hand ward off the impending evil."—*Prophets and Kings*, page 530.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the significance of the expression "weighed in the balances"?**

"You, too, have failed in the great purpose of life if you have not made it your business to glorify God. In the opinion of the world your life may have been a success; you may have risen from poverty to wealth, or have gained a succession of social victories, yet in the judgment of Heaven your life has been a dismal failure, if the God in whose hand thy breath is thou hast not glorified. Are you perplexed as to the

first step in this new and nobler life? Then let me point you to the cross of Christ. He who rejects the salvation which God at infinite cost has provided thereby dishonours God. Let God this day have the glory of saving thee, and seek, through fellowship with Jesus Christ, strength henceforth to glorify God, in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways."—"The Biblical Illustrator," on Daniel 5:23, page 246.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Prophets and Kings," pages 535-538.

October 11

**Part 4**  
**THE GREATNESS**  
**OF THE LORD**  
**Isa. 40:15, 17**

**"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."**

The importance that one attaches to a message from another is largely determined by how he views the person who sends the message. If the message sender is regarded as insignificant, the message will probably be regarded as insignificant also. Only as God's greatness is understood will the importance of His communication to men be appreciated.

"Why is so much attention given to human agencies, while there is so little reaching up of the mind to the eternal God? Why are those who claim to be children of the heavenly King so absorbed in the things of this world? Let the Lord be exalted. Let the word of the Lord be magnified. Let human beings be placed low, and let the Lord be exalted. Remember that earthly kingdoms, nations, monarchs, statesmen, counselors, great armies, and all worldly magnificence and glory are as the dust of the balance."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 481.

**▷ As he compared the greatness of God's visible creation with the smallness of man, what question did David ask? Ps. 8:3, 4.**

"The world, filled with sport and pleasure-loving, is always thirsting for some new interest. And how little time and thought are given to the Creator of the heavens and the earth. God calls upon His creatures to turn their attention from the confusion and perplexity around them, and admire His handiwork. The heavenly bodies are worthy of contemplation. God has made them for the benefit of man, and as we study His works, angels of God will be by our side to enlighten our minds."—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, page 110.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**If men and nations are so insignificant, how can you account for the divine self-sacrifice for man's redemption?**

"But how is that law disregarded! Behold the world today in open rebellion against God. This is in truth a froward generation, filled with ingratitude, formalism, insincerity, pride, and apostasy. Men neglect the Bible and hate truth. Jesus sees His law rejected, His love despised, His ambassadors treated with indifference. He has

spoken by His mercies, but these have been unacknowledged; He has spoken by warnings, but these have been unheeded. The temple courts of the human soul have been turned into places of unholy traffic. Selfishness, envy, pride, malice—all are cherished."—"Prophets and Kings," page 185.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Ministry of Healing," pages 415-418.

**Part 5  
GOD AND THE  
FUTURE**

**Dan. 2:27, 28, 44**

► **How far into the future were events revealed to Nebuchadnezzar?**

**"The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."**

"Daniel declared plainly that the wise men, the astrologers, the soothsayers, and the magicians could not make known this secret. It was beyond their power. Therefore the king should not be angry with them, nor put confidence in their vain superstitions. The prophet proceeded to make known the true God, who rules in heaven, and is the only revealer of secrets."—Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (1944 ed.), page 37.

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

► **What unique power belongs to God? Isa. 41:21-23; 44:7, 8.**

"God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1082.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is God's purpose in predictive prophecy?**

"Nebuchadnezzar felt that he could accept this interpretation as a divine revelation; for to Daniel had been revealed every detail of the dream. The solemn truths conveyed by the interpretation of this vision of the night

made a deep impression on the sovereign's mind, and in humility and awe he fell upon his face, and worshipped."—Ellen G. White Comments, *"SDA Bible Commentary,"* Vol. 4, p. 1169.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "*Education*," pages 173-175.

October 13

**Part 6**  
**WARNINGS FOR**  
**TODAY**

**2 Peter 3:10**

► **What events will take place at "the day of the Lord"?**

**"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."**

"The hand of Omnipotence is at no loss for ways and means to accomplish His purposes. He could reach into the bowels of the earth and call forth His weapons, waters there concealed, to aid in the destruction of the corrupt inhabitants of the old world. . . .

"Water will never destroy the earth again, but the weapons of God are concealed in the bowels of the earth, which He will draw forth to unite with the fire from heaven to accomplish His purpose in the destruction of all those who would not receive the message of warning and purify their souls in obeying the truth and being obedient to the laws of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 946.

► **What is implied as that which alone will survive the world's destruction? 2 Peter 3:11.**

"Many who profess to be looking for the speedy coming of Christ, are becoming conformed to this world, and seek more earnestly for the applause of those around them, than the approbation of God. . . .

"Many of these professed Christians dress, talk and act like the world, and the only thing by which they may be known, is their profession. Though they profess to be looking for Christ, their conversation is not in heaven, but on worldly things."—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, page 352.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what sense should we fear as we read of God's warnings?**

"When the flood of waters was at its height upon the earth, it had the appearance of a boundless lake of water. When God finally purifies the earth, it will appear like a boundless lake of fire. As God preserved the ark amid the commotions of the Flood, because it contained eight righteous persons, He will preserve the New Jerusalem, containing the faithful of all ages, from

righteous Abel down to the last saint which lived. Although the whole earth, with the exception of that portion where the city rests, will be wrapped in a sea of liquid fire, yet the city is preserved as was the ark, by a miracle of Almighty power. It stands unharmed amid the devouring elements."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 986.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 9, pp. 11-13.



## SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING: FALSE RELIGION 3

**"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matt. 24:24.**

In response to the disciples' request for a sign of His coming (Matt. 24:3) Jesus first presented the warning about false christs. Most of the signs that Jesus presented He mentioned only once. This one, along with one other, He gave twice. The importance that Jesus attached to this sign is indicated by its position and repetition.

If you are to meet a person at the station or airport, it is important that you meet the person you are expecting, and not someone else. If, in relation to the coming of Jesus, we were to meet and accept an impostor, then our hope in the advent would be in vain.

We must meet Jesus, and not an impersonator. The signs Jesus gave are to assure that we prepare for and meet the true Christ, and not a deceiver; and the efforts at deception themselves constitute a sign of the advent.

This lesson deals with Satan's efforts to conquer truth by deception.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Impostors**  
Matt. 24:4, 5, 11
2. **Miracles**  
Matt. 24:24
3. **Spiritism**  
2 Thess. 2:9
4. **The First Deception**  
Gen. 3:4; 2:17
5. **Illustration of Satan's Deception**  
1 Sam. 28:7
6. **How to Reject Deception**  
Eph. 6:10, 14-17

October 15

**Part 1**  
**IMPOSTORS**  
**Matt. 24:4, 5, 11**

► **What did Jesus say would cause many to be deceived?**

**"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."**

This statement of Jesus was directed primarily to the time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and secondarily to the time leading to the second advent. The signs for these two events are blended in verses 4-20. Beginning in verse 21 the prophecy relates specifically to Christ's return. See *The Desire of Ages*, page 630, last two paragraphs.

► **The second mention of false christs and prophets follows what prophecy? Matt. 24:21-24. What does this indicate?**

"Many false messiahs will appear, claiming to work miracles, and declaring that the time of the deliverance of the Jewish nation has come. These will mislead many. Christ's words were fulfilled. Between His death and the siege of Jerusalem many false messiahs appeared. But this warning was given also to those who live in this age of the world. The same deceptions practiced prior to the destruction of Jerusalem have been practiced through the ages, and will be practiced again."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 628.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the basic purpose of deception?**

"This sign is given as a sign of the second advent. Even now false christs and false prophets are showing signs and wonders to seduce His disciples. Do we not hear the cry, 'Behold, He is in the desert'? Have not thousands gone forth into the desert, hoping to find Christ? And from thousands of gatherings where men profess to hold

communion with departed spirits is not the call now heard, 'Behold, He is in the secret chambers'? This is the very claim that spiritism puts forth. But what says Christ? 'Believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.' " —"*The Desire of Ages*," page 631.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 523, 524.

October 16

**Part 2**  
**MIRACLES**  
**Matt. 24:24**

► **How will false christs and false prophets seek to substantiate their deceptions?**

**"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."**

"Satan has come down in these last days to work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. His satanic majesty works miracles in the sight of false prophets, in the sight of men, claiming that he is indeed Christ Himself. Satan gives his power to those who are aiding him in his deceptions; therefore those who claim to have the great power of God can only be discerned by the great detector, the law of Jehovah. The Lord tells us if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. The sheep's clothing seems so real, so genuine, that the wolf can be discerned only as we go to God's great moral standard and there find that they are transgressors of the law of Jehovah."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1106.

► **What power is presented in Revelation as also performing miracles to support deceit? Rev. 13:11, 13, 14.**

"No mere impostures are here foretold. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan's agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.

"The prince of darkness, who has so long bent the powers of his mastermind to the work of deception, skillfully adapts his temptations to men of all classes and conditions. . . .

"The mighty being who could take the world's Redeemer to an exceedingly high mountain and bring before Him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, will present his temptations to men in a manner to pervert the senses of all who are not shielded by divine power."—*The Great Controversy*, pages 553, 554.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What does a miracle prove? See "Selected Messages," Bk. 2, pp. 52, 54.**

"The time is coming when Satan will work miracles right in your sight, claiming that he is Christ; and if your feet are not firmly established upon the truth of God, then you will be led away from your foundation. The only safety for you is to search for the truth as for hid treasures. Dig for the truth as you would for treasures in the earth, and

present the word of God, the Bible, before your Heavenly Father, and say, Enlighten me; teach me what is truth. . . . You should store the mind with the word of God; for you may be separated, and placed where you will not have the privilege of meeting with the children of God."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Apr. 3, 1888.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 528, 529.

October 17

**Part 3**  
**SPIRITISM**  
**2 Thess. 2:9**

► **What means of deception will be used by a power allied with Satan?**

**"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."**

"Says Christ, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' If those through whom cures are performed, are disposed, on account of these manifestations, to excuse their neglect of the law of God and continue in disobedience, though they have power to any and every extent, it does not follow that they have the great power of God. On the contrary, it is the miracle-working power of the great deceiver. He is a transgressor of the moral law, and employs every device that he can master to blind men to its true character. We are warned that in the last days he will work with signs and lying wonders. And he will continue these wonders until the close of probation, that he may point to them as evidence that he is an angel of light and not of darkness."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 911.

► **What is the source of power behind the miracle working that culminates in Armageddon? Rev. 16:14.**

"Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven. By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures."—*The Great Controversy*, page 624.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why will the elect not be deceived by Satan's delusions?**

"Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. . . . The shout of triumph rings out upon

the air: 'Christ has come! Christ has come! The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them. . . . This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion.'"—*The Great Controversy*," page 624.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "*The Great Controversy*," pages 624-626.

October 18

**Part 4**  
**THE FIRST**  
**DECEPTION**  
**Gen. 3:4; 2:17**

► **What was earth's first deception? How do you know it was a deception?**

**"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die."**

**"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thou shalt surely die."**

"Satan has long been preparing for his final effort to deceive the world. The foundation of his work was laid by the assurance given to Eve in Eden: 'Ye shall not surely die.' 'In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' . . . Little by little he has prepared the way for his masterpiece of deception in the development of spiritualism. He has not yet reached the full accomplishment of his designs; but it will be reached in the last remnant of time."—*The Great Controversy*, page 561.

► **Contrast the deceptive promise of the serpent and the results of believing it. Gen. 3:4, 5, 19.**

"The only one who promised Adam life in disobedience was the great deceiver. And the declaration of the serpent to Eve in Eden—'Ye shall not surely die'—was the first sermon ever preached upon the immortality of the soul. Yet this declaration, resting solely upon the authority of Satan, is echoed from the pulpits of Christendom and is received by the majority of mankind as readily as it was received by our first parents. The divine sentence, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die' (Ezekiel 18:20), is made to mean: The soul that sinneth, it shall not die, but live eternally. We cannot but wonder at the strange infatuation which renders men so credulous concerning the words of Satan and so unbelieving in regard to the words of God."—*The Great Controversy*, page 533.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why is Satan eager to deceive people?**

"Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the con-

trary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," page 55.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 531-534.

October 19

Part 5  
ILLUSTRATION  
OF SATAN'S  
DECEPTION  
1 Sam. 28:7

► To whom did Saul turn in a time of emergency?

"Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor."

"When Saul asked the medium to describe what she saw, she replied, 'An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle.' But *Saul actually saw nothing*. The narrative declares 'Saul perceived' (that is, believed with the mind) that what this abandoned woman saw was Samuel. We do not doubt that she saw something, but it certainly was not Samuel. Is it likely that Samuel, the prophet of God and leader of the nation, the man who during life vigorously condemned witchcraft, would, even if such a thing were possible, come in answer to the demands of a witch during her incantations at night? Such a thing is unthinkable.

"The whole episode was plainly the work of evil angels. It is evident that Saul received neither comfort nor assurance. The next day this poor deceived man took his own life. One can never contemplate that massive form bending over the upturned sword of suicide without realizing the awful price he paid for his willful disobedience. When he turned aside from the living God and sought the counsel of mediums he was fighting against God."—R. A. Anderson, *Secrets of the Spirit World*, pages 59, 60.

► What was the result of Saul's spiritistic inquiry?  
1 Chron. 10:13.

"By consulting that spirit of darkness Saul had destroyed himself. . . . Separated from the Source of strength, he could not lead the minds of Israel to look to God as their helper. Thus the prediction of evil would work its own accomplishment."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 681.

THINK IT THROUGH

Of what relevancy today is the ancient story of Saul and the medium?

"Modern spiritualism, resting upon the same foundation, is but a revival in a new form of the witchcraft and demon worship that God condemned and prohibited of old. It is foretold in the Scriptures, which declare that 'in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.' 1 Timothy

4:1. Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, points to the special working of Satan in spiritualism as an event to take place immediately before the second advent of Christ. . . . He declares that it is 'after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.' 2 Thessalonians 2:9." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*" page 686.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Patriarchs and Prophets," pages 683-687.

October 20

**Part 6**  
**HOW TO REJECT**  
**DECEPTION**  
**Eph. 6:10, 14-17**

▶ **What specific provisions has God made to enable the Christian to withstand Satan's deceptions?**

**"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."**

Each of the six parts of the Christian life, that Paul illustrates as pieces of armor, is related directly to the Christian's mind. And the idea of deception assumes intelligence, for there can be no deception without a mind to deceive. The mind of every living human being will eventually either be committed to truth or deceived. The only protection against the deceptions of Satan, now or future, is in truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Spirit working through the Word.

▶ **What did Jesus point to as protection against deception? Matt. 24:24, 25.**

Jesus foretold the general nature of the deceptions that would confront the world before His advent. Without revelation the world would be helplessly deceived. With revelation the world's people will have opportunity to choose between believing the truth and believing a lie.

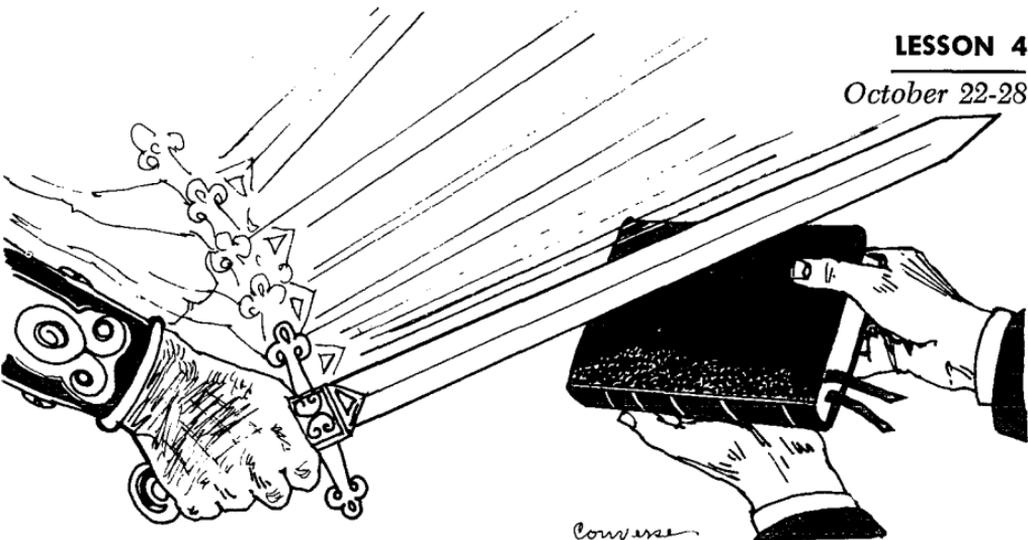
**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Is there any other source of protection against the deceptions of Satan than the Scriptures? Why?**

"In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last

great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God's immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?"—"The Great Controversy," pages 593, 594.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "The Great Controversy," pages 593-602.



## SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING: TRIBULATION AND THE GOSPEL 4

**"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. 3:12, 13.**

In last week's lesson we noted Christ's warning that deception in religion would be practiced until His coming. The other sign that Jesus stated twice was persecution. (Matt. 24:9, 10, and 21, 22.) Thus deception and persecution were given more emphasis by Jesus than any other signs in Matthew 24. While last week we studied Satan's use of deceit to prevent preparation for the advent, this week we will first note his use of violence for the same purpose. Jesus noted deceit and persecution to be so certain a strategy of Satan that they actually constituted signs of Jesus' return.

In Matthew 24 these two devilish phenomena are presented together. (Vs. 9-11 and 21-24.) They belong together. The devil is both a liar and a murderer, and he uses both of his traits against the waiting church of Jesus Christ. By contrast Jesus Christ is the True Witness and the Lord of life.

As the world's use of deception and violence to gain adherents to its principles is a sign of Jesus' return, so the preaching of the gospel in all the world is a sign. This is

the Christian counterpart of deception and persecution—the truth made plain by witness. In Matt. 24:9-14 Jesus presents the methods of the world and of the church which each uses to gain the allegiance of earth's population in the days preceding Jesus' return. Both the method of the world and the method of the church will be studied this week as signs of Jesus' advent.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Tribulation for Christ's Name**  
Matt. 24:9, 10
2. **The Great Tribulation**  
Matt. 24:21
3. **Future Tribulation**  
Rev. 13:15-17
4. **Preaching the Gospel**  
Matt. 24:14
5. **Universal Witness**  
Rev. 14:6; Matt. 24:14
6. **Impending Loud Cry**  
Rev. 18:1, 4

LESSON 4

October 22

Part I  
TRIBULATION FOR  
CHRIST'S NAME  
Matt. 24:9, 10

► What did Jesus say would be a cause of apostasy before His coming?

**"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."**

What is the reason for this hatred, by the world, of those who follow Jesus? It is because the principle by which the world lives and that by which Jesus and His followers live are incompatible opposites. The self-centered principle of Satan and the world leads men to resort to force. The principle of love, or unselfishness, held by Jesus and His followers leaves every person free to make his own decision.

"Between righteousness and sin, love and hatred, truth and falsehood, there is an irrepressible conflict. When one presents the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is drawing away the subjects of Satan's kingdom, and the prince of evil is aroused to resist it. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ. The character of the persecution changes with the times, but the principle—the spirit that underlies it—is the same that has slain the chosen of the Lord ever since the days of Abel."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 29.

► To what times do Jesus' words of verse 9 point? Matt. 24:1-3.

"From Olivet the Saviour beheld the storms about to fall upon the apostolic church; and penetrating deeper into the future, His eye discerned the fierce, wasting tempests that were to beat upon His followers in the coming ages of darkness and persecution. In a few brief utterances. . . . He foretold the portion which the rulers of this world would mete out to the church of God."—*The Great Controversy*, page 39.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the meaning of the phrase "for my name's sake"?

"The Saviour bode His disciples not to hope that the world's enmity to the gospel would be overcome, and that after a time its opposition would cease. He said, 'I come not to send peace, but a sword.' This creating of strife is not the effect of the gospel, but the result of opposition to it. Of all persecution the hardest to bear is vorience in the

home, the estrangement of dearest earthly friends. But Jesus declares, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.'"—"The Desire of Ages," page 357.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Desire of Ages," pages 354-357.

LESSON 4

October 23

Part 2  
THE GREAT  
TRIBULATION  
Matt. 24:21

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

► What prophetic period was the time of great tribulation? Dan. 7:25.

"From the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ passed on rapidly to the greater event, the last link in the chain of this earth's history,—the coming of the Son of God in majesty and glory. Between these two events, there lay open to Christ's view long centuries of darkness, centuries for His church marked with blood and tears and agony. Upon these scenes His disciples could not then endure to look, and Jesus passed them by with a brief mention. 'Then shall be great tribulation,' He said, 'such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.' For more than a thousand years such persecution as the world had never before known was to come upon Christ's followers. Millions upon millions of His faithful witnesses were to be slain."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 630, 631.

► What would prevent the complete annihilation of human beings? Matt. 24:22.

"The persecution of the church did not continue throughout the entire period of the 1260 years. God in mercy to His people cut short the time of their fiery trial. In foretelling the 'great tribulation' to befall the church, the Saviour said: 'Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.' Matthew 24:22. Through the influence of the Reformation the persecution was brought to an end prior to 1798."—*The Great Controversy*, pages 266, 267.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the root relationship between persecution and the second coming of Jesus?

"When Cain, moved by the spirit of the wicked one, saw that he could not control Abel, he was so enraged that he destroyed his life. And wherever there are any who will stand in vindication of the righteousness of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested against them. It is the spirit that through all the ages has set up the

stake and kindled the burning pile for the disciples of Christ. But the cruelties heaped upon the follower of Jesus are instigated by Satan and his hosts because they cannot force him to submit to their control. It is the rage of a vanquished foe. Every martyr of Jesus has died a conquerer.—"Patriarchs and Prophets," page 77.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Acts of the Apostles," pages 84-86.

LESSON 4

October 24

Part 3  
FUTURE  
TRIBULATION  
Rev. 13:15-17

► What results will follow a refusal to worship according to legal prescription?

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

"As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath [in the final crisis], some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as slaves. To human wisdom all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God's fear and love are removed."—*The Great Controversy*, page 608.

"Let opposition arise, let bigotry and intolerance again bear sway, let persecution be kindled, and the halfhearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity."—*Ibid.*, p. 602.

► What separation in the church does the deception and violence of the world bring? Matt. 24:12, 13.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why does true Christianity produce persecution?

"God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God.

"Those who honor the Bible Sabbath

will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government."—*The Great Controversy*," pages 591, 592.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 603-605.

**LESSON 4**

October 25

**Part 4  
PREACHING THE  
GOSPEL  
Matt. 24:14**

▶ **What is the content of the message that is to be heralded?**

**"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."**

The gospel is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. "Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, lift Him up in sermon, in song, in prayer. Let all your powers be directed to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, lost, to 'the Lamb of God.' Lift Him up, the risen Saviour, and say to all who hear, Come to Him who 'hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us.' Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song. Let it be poured forth in every supplication. Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement Christ, the wisdom and power of God. Hold forth the word of life, presenting Jesus as the hope of the penitent and the stronghold of every believer. Reveal the way of peace to the troubled and the despondent, and show forth the grace and completeness of the Saviour."—*Gospel Workers*, page 160.

▶ **By what method is the gospel of Jesus to be carried?**

"God's appointed means of saving souls is through 'the foolishness of preaching.' Though human, and compassed with the frailties of humanity, men are God's messengers; and the dear Saviour is grieved when so little is effected by their labors. Every minister who goes out into the great harvest field should magnify his office. He should not only seek to bring men to the knowledge of the truth, but he should labor, as did Paul, 'warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom,' that he may 'present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.'"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 300.

Contrast this loving persuasion with the persecution by Satan and his followers.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Is my life-style based on the persuasive principles of the gospel, or the coercive principles of the world?**

"Persecution will spread the light. The servants of Christ will be brought before the great men of the world, who, but for this, might never hear the gospel. . . . As the Spirit of God illuminates the minds of His servants, the truth will be presented in its divine power and preciousness. Those who reject the truth will stand to accuse and

oppress the disciples. But under loss and suffering, even unto death, the Lord's children are to reveal the meekness of their divine Example. Thus will be seen the contrast between Satan's agents and the representatives of Christ. The Saviour will be lifted up before the rulers and the people."—*"The Desire of Ages,"* page 354.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Desire of Ages," pages 349-352.

October 26

LESSON 4

Part 5  
UNIVERSAL  
WITNESS  
Rev. 14:6;  
Matt. 24:14

▶ How widespread and particular is the last preaching of the gospel to be?

"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."

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

"The commission given to the disciples is given also to us. To-day, as then, a crucified and risen Saviour is to be uplifted before those who are without God and without hope in the world. The Lord calls for pastors, teachers, and evangelists. From door to door His servants are to proclaim the message of salvation. To every nation, kindred, tongue, and people the tidings of pardon through Christ are to be carried."—*Gospel Workers*, page 29.

Note that the preaching of the gospel is coextensive with the hatred of the world for Jesus' followers.

▶ Why must all men hear the message?

"But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. There are many who have never had an opportunity to hear the special truths for this time. The obligation of the fourth commandment has never been set before them in its true light. He who reads every heart, and tries every motive will leave none who desire a knowledge of the truth, to be deceived as to the issues of the controversy. The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Everyone is to have sufficient light to make his decision intelligently."—*The Great Controversy*, page 605.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my paramount task in hastening the advent?

"The power of a higher, purer, nobler life is our great need. The world is watching to see what fruit is borne by professed Christians. It has a right to look for self-denial and self-sacrifice from those who believe advanced truth. . . .

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of the Saviour shall be perfectly reproduced

in His people, then He will come to claim His own. It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten, the coming of our Lord. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel! Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come."—"Counsels to Teachers," page 324.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Counsels to Teachers," pages 321-324.

LESSON 4

October 27

Part 6  
IMPENDING  
LOUD CRY  
Rev. 18:1, 4

► What is the purpose of the final gospel witness?

**"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory." "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."**

"The Lord God of heaven will not send upon the world His judgments for disobedience and transgression until He has sent His watchmen to give the warning. He will not close up the period of probation until the message shall be more distinctly proclaimed. The law of God is to be magnified; its claims must be presented in their true, sacred character, that the people may be brought to decide for or against the truth. Yet the work will be cut short in righteousness. The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 19.

"The prophecies in the eighteenth of Revelation will soon be fulfilled. During the proclamation of the third angel's message, 'another angel' is to 'come down from heaven, having great power,' and the earth is to be 'lightened with his glory.' The Spirit of the Lord will so graciously bless consecrated human instrumentalities that men, women, and children will open their lips in praise and thanksgiving, filling the earth with the knowledge of God, and with His unsurpassed glory, as the waters cover the sea."—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 984.

"During the loud cry, the church, aided by the providential interpositions of her exalted Lord, will diffuse the knowledge of salvation so abundantly that light will be communicated to every city and town. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of salvation. So abundantly will the renewing Spirit of God have crowned with success the intensely active agencies, that the light of present truth will be seen flashing everywhere."—*Evangelism*, page 694.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the prerequisites to my receiving the latter rain and participating in the loud cry?

"Instead of man's speculations, let the word of God be preached. Let Christians put away their dissensions, and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them in faith ask for the blessing, and it will come. The outpour-

ing of the Spirit in apostolic days was the 'former rain,' and glorious was the result. But the 'latter rain' will be more abundant. Joel 2:23."—"The Desire of Ages," page 827.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 610-612.

October 29 to November 4



## SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING: IN THE HEAVENS 5

**"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Matt. 24:29.**

The greatest event of all the ages, the second coming of Christ, is soon to take place. He wants us to know about this wonderful event so that we may be ready for it. Himself the greatest of the prophets, He promised that the approach of His return would be announced by undeniable signs in that most noticeable of all sign-boards, the heavens.

"He comes again, Creator of the speeding spheres. The God of nature returns. Little wonder that the very elements will first herald and then accompany His triumphant descent! . . .

"At the time of Christ's death the sun refused to shine on the scene. The earth quaked. All nature rebelled at what was done to its Creator. Would you not, then, expect that the God of the atom, the Christ who stilled the storm and quieted the waves with a word, would herald His return, the climax of human history, by manifestations in nature? Listen to this: 'I will shew wonders in the heavens . . . before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.' Joel 2:30, 31. And Jesus Himself said,

'There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.' Luke 21:25."—George Vandeman, *Planet in Rebellion*, page 118.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Celestial Signs of the Past**  
Ex. 10:21-23
2. **The Prophets Predicted Celestial Signs**  
Amos 8:9
3. **The Day of the Lord**  
Isa. 13:9, 10
4. **New Testament Predictions of Celestial Signs**  
Matt. 24:29, first part
5. **The Meaning of the Dark Day and the Falling Stars**  
Matt. 24:30
6. **The Modern Relevancy of Celestial Signs**  
Matt. 24:29, 30

**Part 1**  
**CELESTIAL SIGNS**  
**OF THE PAST**  
**Ex. 10:21-23**

► **What circumstances prevailed during the ninth plague on Egypt?**

**"And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."**

"Not only were the people deprived of light, but the atmosphere was very oppressive, so that breathing was difficult. 'They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.' The sun and moon were objects of worship to the Egyptians; in this mysterious darkness the people and their gods alike were smitten by the power that had undertaken the cause of the bondmen. Yet fearful as it was, this judgment is an evidence of God's compassion and His unwillingness to destroy. He would give the people time for reflection and repentance before bringing upon them the last and most terrible of the plagues."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 272.

► **When Jesus was crucified, what conditions existed for three hours? Luke 23:44, 45.**

"Complete darkness, like a funeral pall, enveloped the cross. 'There was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.' There was no eclipse or other natural cause for this darkness, which was as deep as midnight without moon or stars. It was a miraculous testimony given by God that the faith of after generations might be confirmed."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 753.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**For what reasons did God give these signs on Egypt and at the cross?**

"The conviction forced upon many at the time of Christ's trial, at the time when the three hours' darkness enshrouded the cross, without any natural cause for it, and when the last sentences were uttered, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' 'It is finished,' 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit,' was seed sown that ripened into harvest when at a future date the

gospel was boldly proclaimed by His disciples. The shaking earth, the piercing cry, the sudden death which called forth in no whispered tones the cry, 'It is finished,' forced from many the words, 'Assuredly this man was righteous'; 'Truly this was the Son of God.'"  
—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1108.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "The Desire of Ages," pages 753-757.

October 30

**Part 2**  
**THE PROPHETS**  
**PREDICTED**  
**CELESTIAL SIGNS**  
**Amos 8:9**

► **What celestial wonders did Amos prophesy?**

**"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day."**

This prophecy was written by Amos as part of a larger prophecy, including all of chapter 8, that deals with the captivity of the northern kingdom, Israel, and her eventual non-existence.

► **What celestial wonders did Ezekiel prophesy? Ezek. 32:7. About what event was he writing? Verses 2, 7.**

► **In what context did Joel write of celestial signs? Joel 3:1, 15.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is common to the setting in which the prophets predict celestial signs?**

"The student of the Bible who hopes to secure from it the greatest help will first proceed to reconstruct the historical context of each passage. He will listen to the prophet speaking to Israel of old and endeavor to understand what his words meant to the people who originally heard them. But he will listen also for the further import the prophet's words may have for later times, particularly, our time. Indeed, this secondary application is for us today the more significant. But it is only against the background of the original historical context of the message that its meaning

and value for us can be established with certainty.

"A study of the Old Testament prophets that consists primarily of lifting selected passages here and there out of their historical context and arbitrarily applying them to our day—as if the prophet spoke exclusively for our benefit—is fraught with grave danger. In fact, this procedure is responsible more than anything else for the fanciful interpretations that distinguish the teachings of certain religious groups." —"SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 4, pp. 37, 38.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 4, pp. 36-38.

October 31

**Part 3**  
**THE DAY OF**  
**THE LORD**  
**Isa. 13:9, 10**

**"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."**

In yesterday's section of the lesson the relation between prophecies of doom and celestial signs was noted. The prophets often refer to these days of judgment as "the day of the Lord," as does Isaiah in the above reference.

"This expression occurs at least 20 times in the writings of the various OT prophets. It is always used in reference to a time of divine judgment upon a city or nation (rather than upon individuals), or eventually upon the inhabitants of the whole world. . . .

"'The day of the Lord' against Judah (see Isa. 2:12; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Zeph. 1:7) was thus the day when, as a nation, it was no longer permitted to continue on in its reprobate course and divine judgment was meted out against it (see Eze. 12:21-28). . . . What happens to a city or to an entire nation when 'the day of the Lord' comes to it is similar to what will happen to the whole world at the close of its probation. . . . Thus, principles that apply when 'the day of the Lord' comes to any city or nation also apply when 'the day of the Lord' comes upon the world as a whole, and an OT prophetic description of the fate of some ancient city or nation in terms of 'the day of the Lord' applies also in principle to 'the great day of the Lord' (Zeph. 1:14) at the end of time."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Isa. 13:6.

► **What description of the day of the Lord is given by Zephaniah? Zeph. 1:14, 15.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How is the expression "the day of the Lord" appropriate to the day of doom and judgment?**

"God's elect must stand untainted amid the corruptions teeming around them in these last days. . . . The Spirit of God should have perfect control, influencing every action.

"Those who enter upon active life with firm principles will be prepared to stand unsullied amid the moral pollutions of this corrupt age.

"Who, O Lord, shall stand when thou appearest?' Only those who have

clean hands and a pure heart shall abide in the day of His coming. . . . As you hope to be finally exalted to join the society of sinless angels and to live in an atmosphere where there is not the least taint of sin, seek purity; for nothing else will abide the searching test of the day of God and be received into a pure and holy heaven."—Ellen G. White, "My Life Today," page 72.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 310, 311.

November 1

**Part 4**  
**NEW TESTAMENT**  
**PREDICTIONS OF**  
**CELESTIAL SIGNS**

**Matt. 24:29, first part**

► **What events related to the sun and moon did Jesus foretell?**

**"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light."**

Jesus "mentioned certain events to precede His coming, and fixed the time when the first of these should be witnessed: 'In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.' Mark 13:24. The 1260 days, or years, terminated in 1798. A quarter of a century earlier, persecution had almost wholly ceased. Following this persecution, according to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled."—*The Great Controversy*, page 306.

► **What event related to the stars did Jesus foretell? Mark 13:25.**

"In 1833, . . . the last of the signs appeared which were promised by the Saviour as tokens of His second advent. Said Jesus: 'The stars shall fall from heaven.' Matthew 24:29. . . . This prophecy received a striking and impressive fulfillment in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833."—*The Great Controversy*, page 333.

The dark day and the falling of the stars are occurrences that are so well-known among Seventh-day Adventists that one may question the wisdom of including them here. The purpose is to look at them anew in the light of related Old Testament texts. They are thus seen, not as merely unusual happenings that foretell the advent of Jesus, but as events that bristle with meaning imparted by their Old Testament antecedents and that give an eschatological quality to our own life time.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why are celestial signs especially appropriate as signs of the advent from a Biblical viewpoint? From a psychological viewpoint?**

"Let men beware lest they neglect the lesson conveyed to them in the words of Christ. As He warned His disciples of Jerusalem's destruction, giving them a sign of the approaching ruin, that they might make their escape; so He has warned the world of the day of final destruction and has given them tokens of its approach, that all who will may flee from the wrath to come.

Jesus declares: 'There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations.' Luke 21:25; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24-26; Revelation 6:12-17. Those who behold these harbingers of His coming are to 'know that it is near, even at the doors.' Matthew 24:33."  
—"The Great Controversy," pages 37, 38.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "Early Writings," page 41.

**Part 5**  
**THE MEANING OF**  
**THE DARK DAY**  
**AND THE**  
**FALLING STARS**  
**Matt. 24:30**

**"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."**

The darkened sun and accompanying manifestations, which were related to the day of the Lord in the Old Testament, Jesus now relates to His coming again. The conclusion is inescapable that Jesus regards His second advent as the day of the Lord for the whole world. But He does not say that the day of His coming will be black or sunless, as some of the prophets described the day of the Lord, but that a sunless day will precede His coming. Thus that which was used in the Old Testament as a description of the day of the Lord itself is in the New Testament used as a sign preceding the day of the Lord to indicate that it is approaching. As the day of the Lord was the moment of defeat of a city or nation, so the coming day of the Lord is the day of defeat and surrender of those in the world who have rebelled against God.

The Old Testament signs in the stars are stated only as nonvisibility. This clearly relates to the darkness of the day of the Lord and not to the falling of the stars. The meteoric shower is a prophecy of Jesus and John (Rev. 6:12, 13) that has no Old Testament precedent, but by its close textual connection with the dark day has precisely the same meaning.

The dark day and the falling stars declared dramatically and nonverbally the same awesome message that Zephaniah enunciated concerning Judah. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly." Zeph. 1:14, first part. That message was fulfilled within the lifetime of men who heard it. More time than that has passed since 1780 and 1833, but then it is a much more awesome event toward which they point than the captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.

► **What did Jesus say would be the reaction of earth's population to the events in connection with His coming? Matt. 24:30.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What significance do you see in the proximity of 1780 and 1833 to the close of two prophetic periods?**

"The world is no more ready to credit the message for this time than were the Jews to receive the Saviour's warning concerning Jerusalem. Come when it may, the day of God will come unawares to the ungodly. When life is going on in its unvarying round; when men are absorbed in pleasure, in business, in traffic, in money-making; when

religious leaders are magnifying the world's progress and enlightenment, and the people are lulled in a false security—then, as the midnight thief steals within the unguarded dwelling, so shall sudden destruction come upon the careless and ungodly, and they shall not escape.' Verse 3."—"The Great Controversy," page 38.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Prophets and Kings," pages 389-391.

November 3

**Part 6**  
**THE MODERN**  
**RELEVANCY OF**  
**CELESTIAL SIGNS**  
**Matt. 24:29, 30**

**"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."**

The dark day and the falling stars are the only *single* events that Jesus stated in His prophecies given in response to the disciples' question about the temple. He mentions recurring events that really are conditions existing in the world through the Christian dispensation. The celestial signs stand out as the great, clear-cut, specified events that announce the "season" of His return.

Some persons question the relevancy of these celestial signs to them because the signs did not occur in their lifetime, or in many instances neither in their lifetime nor in the part of the world in which they live. The question this raises is, Do the dark day and the falling stars have meaning only for those who saw them?

**► For whom was the Passover to have meaning? Ex. 12:25-27. Is the same principle applicable to the cross?**

The great events of the plan of salvation have always had meaning to those who knew about them and not merely to those who lived in the time and place that they occurred. It is our knowledge of the dark day and falling stars, made clear and distinct by the Holy Spirit, that can make relevant to the present day that which happened many years ago or in a distant part of the world.

We live after the signs of darkness and meteorites, and not before them. That can be no more irrelevant to the Christian than that he lives in A.D. time and not B.C.

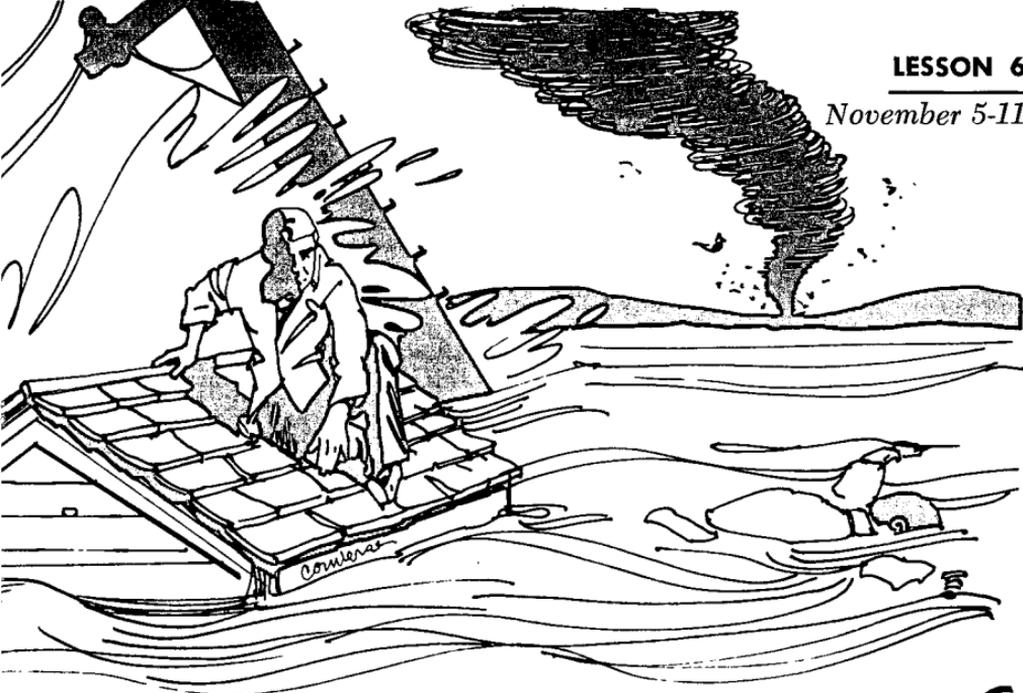
**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How is faith in Jesus Christ related to the question of relevancy of the celestial signs?**

"Where is our faith in the word of God? Must we see things foretold come to pass before we will believe what He has said? In clear, distinct rays light has come to us, showing us that the

great day of the Lord is near at hand, 'even at the doors.' Let us read and understand before it is too late."—  
"Testimonies," Vol. 9, p. 20.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 9, pp. 26, 27.



## SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING: IN THE EARTH 6

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Peter 3:13, 14.

"Everything in the world is in agitation. The signs of the times are ominous. Coming events cast their shadows before. The Spirit of God is withdrawing from the earth, and calamity follows calamity by sea and by land. There are tempests, earthquakes, fires, floods, murders of every grade. Who can read the future? Where is security? There is assurance in nothing that is human or earthly. Rapidly are men ranging themselves under the banner they have chosen. Restlessly are they waiting and watching the movements of their leaders. There are those who are waiting and watching and working for our Lord's appearing. Another class are falling into line under the generalship of the first great apostate. Few believe with heart and soul that we have a hell to shun and a heaven to win. . . .

"Solemnly there come to us down through

the centuries the warning words of our Lord from the Mount of Olives: . . . 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always.'—*The Desire of Ages*, page 636.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **A World in Apprehension**  
Luke 21:25, 26
2. **Rising Tide of Anger**  
Matt. 24:6-8
3. **A World of Scoffers**  
2 Peter 3:3, 4
4. **Economic Injustice**  
James 5:1-4
5. **Social World**  
2 Tim. 3:1-5
6. **Preparation for the Advent**  
2 Peter 3:11, 12

November 5

**Part 1**  
**A WORLD IN**  
**APPREHENSION**  
**Luke 21:25, 26**

► **What two conditions did Jesus say would exist among men before His coming?**

**"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."**

"The Greek implies that the 'perplexity' is due to 'the sea and the waves roaring.' . . .

"The sea. Christ here associates manifestations of the destructive forces of nature with signs in the heavens immediately preceding His return to earth in power and glory.

"Men's hearts. Literally, 'men expiring from fear,' or 'men fainting from fear.' The latter part of the verse gives as the climactic reason for men's hearts failing them for fear, the shaking of 'the powers of heaven.' The scene here depicted takes place under the seventh plague (EW 41; GC 636). Upon this scene 'the wicked look with terror and amazement' . . . , calling for the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Luke 21:25, 26.

While the complete fulfillment of these prophecies comes in connection with the final deliverance of God's people, Ellen G. White, in the following quotation, indicates that these prophecies had begun to be fulfilled as long as seventy-two years ago:

"The nations are in unrest. Times of perplexity are upon us. The waves of the sea are roaring; men's hearts are failing them for fear and for expectation of those things that are coming upon the earth; but those who believe on the Son of God will hear His voice amid the storm, saying, 'It is I; be not afraid.'" —*Evangelism*, page 18.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What can prevent perplexity and fear in the life of the Christian? Be specific and basic.**

"There are troublous times before us; the judgments of God are coming upon our world. The nations of the earth are to tremble. There will be trials and perplexities on every hand; men's hearts will fail them for fear. And what shall we do in that day? Though the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and be removed like a cottage, if we have made God our trust, He will deliver us. . . .

"Christ sees the termination of the conflict. The battle is waging more and more fiercely. Soon He will come whose right it is, and will take possession of all earthly things. All the confusion in our world, all the violence and crime, are a fulfilment of the words of Christ. They are the signs of the nearness of His coming."—Ellen G. White, "Sons and Daughters of God," page 354.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 8, pp. 49, 50.

**Part 2**  
**RISING TIDE**  
**OF ANGER**  
**Matt. 24:6-8**

► **What did Jesus call the wars and catastrophes that would take place before His return?**

**"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."**

"Amid national strife and ruin, the steps of the disciples would be beset with perils, and often their hearts would be oppressed by fear. They were to see Jerusalem a desolation. . . . [Matthew 24:6-8 quoted in part.] Yet Christ's followers were not to fear that their hope was lost or that God had forsaken the earth."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 120.

► **What was the state of the nations as John saw them? Rev. 11:18. What period of history is the context?**

"We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange and eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven—events which it was declared should shortly precede the great day of God. Everything in the world is in an unsettled state. The nations are angry, and great preparations for war are being made. Nation is plotting against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. The great day of God is hastening greatly."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, p. 221.

► **What events are in the news today (November 6, 1972) that you recognize as a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies?**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**If war and calamities are only the beginning of sorrow, what is the sorrow itself?**

"The ruin of Jerusalem was a symbol of the final ruin that shall overwhelm the world. The prophecies that received a partial fulfillment in the overthrow of Jerusalem have a more direct application to the last days. We are now standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. A crisis is before us, such as the world has never witnessed.

And sweetly to us, as to the first disciples, comes the assurance that God's kingdom ruleth over all. The program of coming events is in the hands of our Maker. The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge." —"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 120, 121.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Selected Messages," Bk. 1, pp. 221-225.

November 7

**Part 3**  
**A WORLD OF**  
**SCOFFERS**  
**2 Peter 3:3, 4**

**"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."**

*"There shall come—scoffers]* Persons who shall endeavor to turn all religion into ridicule, as this is the most likely way to depreciate truth in the sight of the giddy multitude. The scoffers, having no solid argument to produce against revelation, . . . affect to laugh at it, and get superficial thinkers to laugh with them.

*"Walking after their own lusts]* Here is the true source of all infidelity. The Gospel of Jesus is *pure* and *holy*, and requires a *holy heart* and *holy life*. They wish to follow their own *lusts*, and consequently cannot brook the restraints of the Gospel: therefore they labour to prove that it is not true."—Clarke's *Commentary*, on 2 Peter 3:3.

► **What question did Jesus ask concerning the last days? Luke 18:8.**

"Human reasoning and the imaginings of the human heart are undermining the inspiration of the Word of God, and that which should be received as granted, is surrounded with a cloud of mysticism. Nothing stands out in clear and distinct lines, upon rock bottom. This is one of the marked signs of the last days."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, p. 15.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What can prevent me from being a scoffer? Be specific.**

"To those who have united themselves to Him, He declares: 'Though a mother may forget her child, "yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." Thou art continually before Me.'

"Oh, what amazing privileges are proffered us!

"Will we put forth most earnest efforts to form this alliance with Christ, through which alone these blessings

are attained? Will we break off our sins by righteousness and our iniquities by turning unto the Lord? Skepticism and infidelity are widespread. Christ asked the question: 'When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?' We must cherish a living, active faith. The permanence of our faith is the condition of our union."—"Testimonies," Vol. 5, pp. 230, 231.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Patriarchs and Prophets," pages 102-104.

November 8

**Part 4**  
**ECONOMIC**  
**INJUSTICE**  
**James 5:1-4**

**"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabbath."**

"For the last days. Or, 'in the last days.' . . . The statements of our Lord concerning the accumulation of riches . . . reveal that the condition described in James 5:1-6 prevailed in NT times. . . . Greed has always led to oppression, and always will. But as with the violence and injustice of which Paul speaks in 2 Tim. 3:1-5 . . . , greed and oppression are to reach a climax in the days immediately preceding the 'coming of the Lord.'"—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on James 5:3.

► **In spite of manifest injustices, what advice did James give his fellow believers? James 5:7.**

"And he brings forth fruit 'with patience.' None who receive God's word are exempt from difficulty and trial; but when affliction comes, the true Christian does not become restless, distrustful, or despondent. Though we can not see the definite outcome of affairs, or discern the purpose of God's providences, we are not to cast away our confidence. Remembering the tender mercies of the Lord, we should cast our care upon Him, and with patience wait for His salvation."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 60, 61.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the Christian remedy for injustice?**

"Love of money and love of display have made this world as a den of thieves and robbers. The Scriptures picture the greed and oppression that will prevail just before Christ's second coming. [James 5:1, 3-6 quoted.]

"Even among those who profess to be walking in the fear of the Lord, there are some who are acting over again the course pursued by the nobles of Israel. Because it is in their power to do so, they exact more than is just, and thus become oppressors. . . .

"Every unjust act toward a fellow

being is a violation of the golden rule. Every wrong done to the children of God is done to Christ Himself in the person of His saints. Every attempt to take advantage of the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another is registered as fraud in the ledger of heaven. He who truly fears God, would rather toil day and night, and eat the bread of poverty, than to indulge the passion for gain that oppresses the widow and fatherless or turns the stranger from his right."—"Prophets and Kings," pages 651, 652.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 1, pp. 174-176.

November 9

**Part 5**  
**SOCIAL WORLD**  
**2 Tim. 3:1-5**

**"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."**

Ellen G. White points out that the individuals described here are not worldlings who make no profession of religion. Rather they are the professing Christians, whose names are on the church books. "Their service to God degenerates into a form. . . . The apostle Paul points out that this will be the special characteristic of those who live just before Christ's second coming. . . .

"This is the class that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411.

► **How did Paul indicate that moral conditions would deteriorate as the end of time approaches? 2 Tim. 3:13.**

"In the night season I seemed to be enumerating in my mind the evidences we have to substantiate the faith we hold. We see that seducers are waxing worse and worse. We see the world working to the point of establishing by law a false sabbath, and making it a test for all. This question will soon be before us. . . . The working out of Satan's plans will bring persecution to the people of God. But the faithful servants of God need not fear the outcome of the conflict. If they will follow the pattern set for them in the life of Christ, if they will be true to the requirements of God, their reward will be eternal life, a life that measures with the life of God."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 2, p. 375.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Which of the last-day characteristics mentioned by Paul are in my life? How can I conquer them?**

"I have seen that there is danger that even the professed children of God will be corrupted. Licentiousness is binding men and women as captives. They seem to be infatuated and powerless to resist and overcome upon the point of appetite and passion. In God there is power; in Him there is strength. If they will take hold upon it, the life-giving power of Jesus will stimulate

everyone who has named the name of Christ. Dangers and perils surround us; and we are only safe when we feel our weakness and cling with the grasp of faith to our mighty Deliverer. It is a fearful time in which we live. We cannot cease watchfulness and prayer for a moment. Our helpless souls must rely on Jesus, our compassionate Redeemer."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 473.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Acts of the Apostles," pages 502-506.

November 10

**Part 6**  
**PREPARATION**  
**FOR THE ADVENT**  
**2 Peter 3:11, 12**

**"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"**

"The dissolution of *all these things* being certain, the urgent consideration becomes, *What sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?* The answer to the question is implied in the terms in which it is asked. The certain dissolution of all these things requires men to live lives of holiness and godliness. Because scoffers assume the permanence of things as they are, they do not *wait for new heavens and a new earth*. The temporal and transient occupy their attention. But holiness and godliness belong to the eternal order. Like 'faith, hope, love' . . . , they abide when *the elements . . . melt with fire.*"—*The Interpreter's Bible*, on 2 Peter 3:11-13, Vol. 12, p. 202.

The things of earth will be dissolved in the day of judgment. All that man has made will be swept away—the lofty skyscrapers, towering dams, broad highways, mighty ships, vast cities—all will vanish. The only thing that will survive is the character of the child of God. In view of this fact, Peter, Paul, and other writers of the New Testament urge us to put first things first. We must give attention to developing a character which will stand in the judgment, one that, when weighed in the balance, will not be found wanting.

► **What will be the condition of the children of God when He appears? 1 John 3:2.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the factor in life that will make me ready for the judgment?**

"The most exalted of the redeemed host that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clad in white, know the conflict of overcoming, for they have come up through great tribulation. Those who have yielded to circumstances rather than engage in this conflict will not know how to stand in that day when anguish will be upon every soul, when, though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could save neither son nor daughter, for everyone must deliver his soul by his own righteousness.

"No one need say that his case is hopeless, that he cannot live the life of a Christian. Ample provision is made by the death of Christ for every soul. Jesus is our ever-present help in time of need. Only call upon Him in faith, and He has promised to hear and answer your petitions.

"Oh, for a living, active faith! We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial."—*"Testimonies,"* Vol. 5, p. 215.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: *"Testimonies,"* Vol. 5, pp. 727-729.



## THE NATURE OF THE SIGNS 7

**"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matt. 24:44.**

In the record of Matthew 24:4-31 Jesus has answered the disciples' question about signs by clearly stating events that would take place between that moment and the second advent, and the destruction of Jerusalem also. But He was not content merely to state the signs. He also taught the disciples how to interpret the signs. They must know how to apply the signs in the actual situation. They must have not only the general knowledge that there would be such-and-such signs, but also the specific knowledge of what the signs did or did not mean. He taught them how to relate to the signs by telling them the parables and illustrations recorded in Matthew 24 and 25—the fig tree, Noah's day, two at work, the thief at night, the two servants, the ten girls, the talents, and the judgment scene.

In the lessons for the next four weeks we will study the teaching of these parables and illustrations about the signs of the second advent, which is the context in which Jesus gave them.

This week primary attention will be given to Matt. 24:32-44. In this passage Jesus taught what the signs can and cannot do, and how believers should therefore react to the signs.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Purpose**  
Matt. 24:32-34
2. **Certainty**  
Verse 35
3. **Limitation: Unknown Day**  
Verses 36-39
4. **Watching Required**  
Verses 40-42
5. **Limitation: Unexpected Hour**  
Verse 43
6. **Readiness Required**  
Verse 44

November 12

**Part 1**  
**PURPOSE**  
**Matt. 24:32, 33**

► **What do the leaves mean in the parable of the fig tree? The summer?**

**"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."**

► **What is the purpose of the signs as revealed by this parable?**

"Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the doors. He says of those who see these signs, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord's coming is at hand."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 632.

"The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, p. 67.

► **How did Jesus add meaning to the word "near"?**  
**Matt. 24:34.**

This prophecy was fulfilled in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem. The city was destroyed in the lifetime of those who saw the signs. Interpretation becomes a problem when we seek the meaning of verse 34 in connection with the second advent. The signs have stretched out over several lifetimes. One explanation that some hold to be tenable emphasizes the conditional nature of God's promises and threatenings as noted above.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How can I maintain a constant consciousness of the nearness of Jesus' return?**

"We have reached the period foretold in these scriptures [Luke 21:31, 34, 36]. The time of the end is come, the visions of the prophets are unsealed, and their solemn warnings point us to our Lord's coming in glory as near at hand."—"The Desire of Ages," page 235.

"Let no one's interpretation of prophecy rob you of the conviction of the knowledge of events which show that this great event is near at hand."—"Fundamentals of Christian Education," page 336.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 8, pp. 252-254.

November 13

**Part 2**  
**CERTAINTY**  
**Matt. 24:35**

► **How certain are Christ's words about the signs and the second advent?**

**"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."**

"The prophecies which the great I AM has given in His word, uniting link after link in the chain of events, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, tell us where we are today in the procession of the ages and what may be expected in the time to come. All that prophecy has foretold as coming to pass, until the present time, has been traced on the pages of history, and we may be assured that all which is yet to come will be fulfilled in its order."—*Prophets and Kings*, page 536.

"It [the coming of the Lord] will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples. Shall we who claim to be students of prophecy forget that God's forbearance to the wicked is a part of the vast and merciful plan by which he is seeking to compass the salvation of souls?"—*Evangelism*, page 697.

► **What expression of the certainty of the advent does Paul give? Heb. 10:36, 37.**

"The lapse of time has brought great changes. Light has increased and has become widespread. While the people who are anxious for truth have been calling, 'Watchman, what of the night?' the answer has been given intelligently, 'The morning cometh, and also the night.' By a thorough investigation of the prophecies we understand where we are in this world's history; and we know for a certainty that the second coming of Christ is near."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 592.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How certain am I in my belief that Jesus is coming soon?**

"My dear brethren and sisters, let the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ be in your minds continually and let them crowd out worldly thoughts and cares. When you lie down and when you rise up, let them be your meditation. Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man. The sealing time is

very short, and will soon be over. Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure."—"Early writings," page 58.

"The return of Christ to our world will not be long delayed. Let this be the keynote of every message."—"Testimonies," Vol. 6, p. 406.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 6, pp. 404, 405.

Part 3  
LIMITATION:  
UNKNOWN DAY  
Matt. 24:36-39

► In what way are the time of Noah and the second advent alike?

**“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”**

The purpose of the signs which Jesus gave was to reveal the approach of the second advent, but the precise time of His appearance was to remain unknown. As the time of arrival of the Flood was unknown to the antedeluvians, so no one knows the day and hour of the second advent. “Again and again have I been warned in regard to time-setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1052.

► What response did Jesus give to the disciples’ question about establishment of the kingdom? Acts 1:6, 7.

“It was not necessary for them to see farther into the future than the revelations He had made enabled them to see. Their work was to proclaim the gospel message.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 30.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What are some reasons that God has not revealed the exact time of the second advent?**

“A great work must be done all through the world, and let no one conclude that, because the end is near, there is no need of special effort to build up the various institutions as the cause shall demand. You are not to know the day or the hour of the Lord’s appearing, for this has not been revealed, and let none speculate on that which has not been given him to understand. Let everyone work upon that which has been placed in his hands, doing the daily duties that God requires.”

“When the Lord shall bid us make no further effort to build meetinghouses and establish schools, sanitariums, and publishing institutions, it will be time for us to fold our hands and let the Lord close up the work; but now is our opportunity to show our zeal for God and our love for humanity. . . .

“The end is near, and for this reason we are to make the most of every entrusted ability and every agency that shall offer help to the work.”—“Testimonies,” Vol. 6, p. 440.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: “Selected Messages,” Bk. 1, pp. 188, 189, 191, 192.

November 15

**Part 4**  
**WATCHING**  
**REQUIRED**  
**Matt. 24:40-42**

► **Because the hour of the advent is unknown, what counsel does Jesus give?**

**"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."**

Jesus continues the thought of men not knowing the time of the advent in the two brief illustrations of two persons working together, and also introduces the idea of a judgment—one taken and one left.

In the absence of knowledge about the time of an important event, the logical course is to watch for it. When an important personage travels in a motorcade through a city, the precise time of the arrival of the motorcade at any point is unknown. People line the route and watch for the arrival of the important personage. To go shopping and fail to watch is to miss the parade.

"Jesus has told His disciples to 'watch,' but not for a definite time. His followers are to be in the position of those who are listening for the orders of their Captain; they are to watch, wait, pray, and work, as they approach the time for the coming of the Lord; but no one will be able to predict just when that time will come; for 'of that day and hour knoweth no man.' You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years."—*Evangelism*, page 221.

► **With what does Jesus contrast watching? Mark 13:35, 36.**

"The attitude of watching is to designate the church as God's people indeed. By this sign the waiting ones are distinguished from the world and show that they are pilgrims and strangers upon the earth."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 205.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the meaning of watching or sleeping while awaiting the advent?**

"We are today to watch that we offend not in word or deed. We must today praise and honor God. By the exercise of living faith today we are to conquer the enemy. We must today seek God and be determined that we will not rest satisfied without His pres-

ence. We should watch and work and pray as though this were the last day that would be granted us. How intensely earnest, then, would be our life. How closely would we follow Jesus in all our words and deeds."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 200.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 2, pp. 190-193.

**Part 5**  
**LIMITATION:**  
**UNEXPECTED HOUR**  
**Matt. 24:43**

► Under what circumstances would the householder have watched for the thief?

**"But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."**

The householder had no information that a thief was coming, and one doesn't stay awake at night watching for a thief he doesn't expect. But Jesus had said (verse 33) that it could be known that He was coming and when He was near. The lesson is by contrast. If the householder had as much information about the thief as the believer has about Christ's advent, he would have watched. It is prudent for the believer to watch.

► Who does Paul say will be taken by surprise when the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night? Who will not be surprised? 1 Thess. 5:2-6.

"The solemn fact is to be kept not only before the people of the world, but before our own churches also, that the day of the Lord will come suddenly, unexpectedly. The fearful warning of the prophecy is addressed to every soul. Let no one feel that he is secure from the danger of being surprised. Let no one's interpretation of prophecy rob you of the conviction of the knowledge of events which show that this great event is near at hand."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 336.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How can I avoid surprise by either the close of probation or the actual appearing of Jesus?**

"When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. . . . Perilous is the condition of those who, growing weary of their watch, turn to the attractions of the world. While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure-lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments,—it may

be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence, 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.'

"Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man's destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy's offer to guilty men. 'Watch ye therefore . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.'"—Ellen G. White, "Sons and Daughters of God," page 355.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 489-491.

**Part 6  
READINESS  
REQUIRED  
Matt. 24:44**

► **What conclusion did Jesus draw from the story of the householder?**

**“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”**

“I ask you, Is the kingdom of God within you? God’s people are to be minutemen, always ready, always composed in Jesus Christ. The time is now come when one moment we may be on solid earth, the next the earth may be heaving beneath our feet. Earthquakes will take place where least expected. . . .

“Christianity—oh, that we might experience its operations! It is a vital, personal experience, that elevates and ennobles the whole man. Every man is responsible to God, who has made provision for all to receive this blessing. But many do not receive it, although Christ has purchased it for them at infinite cost.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 421, 422.

The signs show that advent near, but since the day is unknown and the hour will be unexpected, Jesus says that watching and readiness are essential. The signs were all that the disciples requested, but Jesus taught that there must be a personal watchfulness and readiness for the advent.

► **What is the readiness required to meet Jesus at the advent? Matt. 22:11.**

“It is impossible for man to save himself. He may deceive himself in regard to this matter, but he cannot save himself. Christ’s righteousness alone can avail for his salvation, and this is the gift of God. This is the wedding garment in which you may appear as a welcome guest at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let faith take hold of Christ without delay, and you will be a new creature in Jesus, a light to the world.”—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, p. 331.

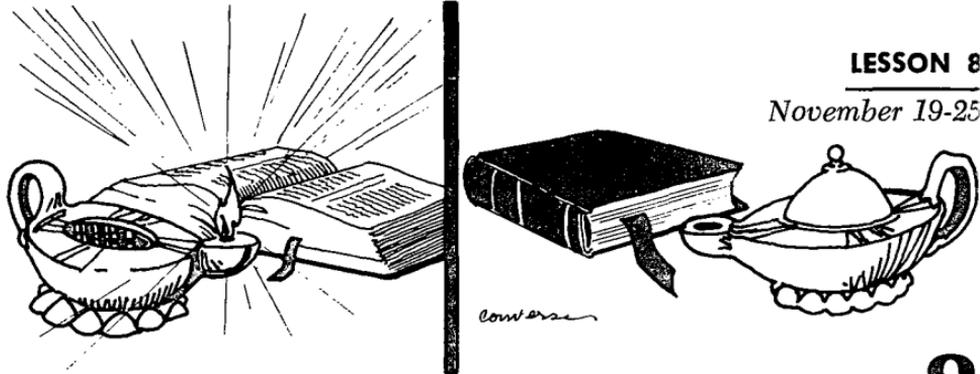
**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How can I receive the righteousness of Christ?**

“In order to be candidates for heaven we must meet the requirement of the law: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself’ (Luke 10:27). We can do this only as we grasp by faith the righteousness of Christ. By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and

the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect.”—“Selected Messages,” Bk. 1, p. 395.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: “Testimonies,” Vol. 1, pp. 123-126.



## READY OR NOT READY? 8

**"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." Matt. 25:10.**

Jesus told the parable of the ten virgins in a sequence of teaching that began with the signs of His coming in Matthew 24. He stated there that the signs would indicate that His coming was near, but the day and hour would remain unknown. Because the precise time of His coming would be unknown, it would be necessary for believers to watch and be ready for His advent. He only stated that these were to be the characteristics of those who would be waiting, in the time of the signs, for the advent; but in chapter 24 He did not explain what it means to watch and be ready.

In the parable of the virgins Jesus dealt with the latter idea first—what it means to be ready. This parable was told especially for us who live in the time of the signs but do not know the date of the advent.

The story through which Jesus teaches about being ready for His return is the story of a wedding.

"A wedding party was one of the greatest of all festivities in a Palestinian village. The bride, groom, and guests were dispensed from certain religious duties, such as sleeping in booths at the feast of Tabernacles. Scholars forsook the study of the Torah, because attending a wedding was a more important duty and privilege."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 7, p. 555.

A wedding is a happy, joyous occasion. In relating the parable of the ten virgins, or bridesmaids, Jesus used the wedding as a symbol of His coming kingdom. He thus

taught that Christians are to face His coming with the same gladness with which the bride's friends look forward to her wedding.

An article by Ellen G. White, "Have You Oil in Your Vessels With Your Lamps?" appears on pages 63-65 of this quarterly. It was originally published in the *Review and Herald* and is reprinted here for reading in conjunction with this week's lesson.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Central Teaching**  
Matt. 25:1-4
2. **The Oil**  
Zech. 4:2, 3, 6
3. **Oil in Lamps**  
Matt. 25:1; Ps. 119:105
4. **Oil and Crisis**  
Matt. 25:5-9
5. **Oil and Acceptance or Rejection**  
Matt. 25:10-12
6. **Have You Oil in Your Vessels With Your Lamps?**  
Matt. 25:13

November 19

**Part 1**  
**CENTRAL**  
**TEACHING**  
**Matt. 25:1-4**

**"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."**

► **Whom do the ten virgins and the bridegroom represent? To answer this question note the circumstances of these persons in Matt. 25:1, 6 and then find these same circumstances in Matthew 24 and note what persons are mentioned in relation to them.**

► **What is the key feature of this parable? Matt. 25: 3, 4.**

While all of the persons, articles, and circumstances in the parable are essential to its understanding, the central feature is the oil. The main thrust of teaching in the parable derives from the circumstance of having or not having oil. To have oil is wise; to lack oil is foolish. To have oil results in reception into the wedding; to lack oil results in rejection by the master of the feast. To have oil is to be ready; to lack oil is to be unready. It follows then that the key question of interpretation of the parable is, "What does the oil mean?" To this question we will direct our study tomorrow.

During this week we shall study this central core of truth—the relation between what the oil represents and readiness for the advent. This was the main thought which Jesus presented. There are valuable secondary ideas in the parable, but these will not be the content of this week's lesson.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Read Matt. 25:1-12 several times, learn the details of the parable, and reflect on it in the light of Matthew 24.**

"As Christ sat looking upon the party that waited for the bridegroom, He told His disciples the story of the ten virgins, by their experience illustrating the experience of the church that shall live just before His second coming."  
—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 406.

"When the ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom, their lamps were trimmed and burning. Apparently there was no difference between the five who

were wise and the five who were foolish. To outward appearance all were prepared, robed in white, and carrying their lighted lamps. But only five of these virgins were wise. These anticipated delay, and filled their flagons with oil, ready for any emergency. Five of the number had not this foresight; they made no provision for disappointment or delay."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Oct. 31, 1899.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 405, 406.

November 20

**Part 2**  
**THE OIL**  
 Zech. 4:2, 3, 6

"And [he] said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof." "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

When Zechariah inquired the meaning of the vision of lamps fed with oil from olive trees, he was given the straightforward message that Zerubbabel, leader of Judah, would succeed by God's Spirit.

In the Israelite sanctuary service a special anointing oil was used for consecration of the tabernacle, furniture, and priests. Everything touched by this oil was symbolically holy. See Ex. 30:25-30. It is the Holy Spirit that makes men and places holy.

The oil in the parable is "the informing Spirit of God which prompts the works and quickens the faith, of which Spirit oil is ever in Scripture the standing symbol."—Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, page 197.

"The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 407.

► **Another approach to interpreting the meaning of oil is to ask, What is there that holds a central place in Christian living equal to the place held by oil in the experience of the ten virgins? Rom. 8:14-17.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the role of the Spirit in the Christian life? Since the oil is the Spirit, and the parable is for those awaiting the advent, what is the implication for me?**

"I am instructed to say to many professed believers, Unless you look upon your religious experience in an altogether different light than you have, you are going to meet with keen disappointment. The righteousness of Christ is revealed from faith to faith; that is, from your present faith to an increased understanding of that faith which works by love and purifies the soul. Those who endure trial for the truth's sake, who make sacrifices to help those in need, do so because of the pres-

ence of the love of God in the soul. When men and women give themselves unreservedly to the exercise of unselfish works, it is because the grace of Christ is in the heart, molding the life to his example. But if the heart is destitute of the Spirit of God, if it does not possess the rich grace of God, there is no oil in the vessel with the lamp, there is no treasure in the earthen vessel."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Sept. 17, 1908.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 407, 408.

November 21

**Part 3**  
**OIL IN LAMPS**  
**Matt. 25:1;**  
**Ps. 119:105**

**"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."**

**"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."**

This word of God represented by the lamp is related to the Bible, but it has a more specific meaning. The oil is in the lamp. The oil is God's Spirit. The Spirit is not in inanimate things, such as books, but abides in people. "Through the Holy Spirit, God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 414. The only way the Scriptures become a lighted lamp is for the Christian to receive their teachings by the Holy Spirit's aid and by the help of the same Spirit live the Word's principles in the daily life.

► **By what means does the believer understand the truth God has revealed? 1 Cor. 2:12.**

"The more closely we adhere to the simplicity of truth, the more surely do we comprehend its deep meaning. Then if the heart is under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, it can say, 'The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple' (Ps. 119:130). This means the word is interpreted by the Holy Spirit, not merely as perused by the student.

"It is not the mere letter of the words which gives the light and the understanding, but the Word is in a special manner written upon the heart, applied by the Holy Spirit."—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, page 139.

► **What is the meaning of an unlighted lamp?**

### THINK IT THROUGH

**How can I receive a "supply" of the Holy Spirit which is adequate to maintain the light of the Word in my life?**

"Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God

sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 408, 411.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Selected Messages," Bk. 1, p. 411; Bk. 2, p. 39.

November 22

**Part 4**  
**OIL AND CRISIS**  
**Matt. 25:5-9**

**"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."**

All ten girls started out with lighted lamps—that is, a life apparently in harmony with the Bible and led by the Spirit. Outwardly the same, they were inwardly dissimilar.

The difference was in the quantity of oil that each group had, that is, the extent to which each was indwelt by the Spirit.

It was noted in yesterday's study that the lighted lamp represented a believer living out the principles of the Bible by the Spirit's aid. The foolish virgins, then, must represent those who do not continue to live by the Word and the Spirit, but have retained the form of religious faith, as evidenced by the nearly empty lamp.

In the parable the oil could not be obtained quickly enough to benefit the foolish virgins. Since this is speaking of human experience with the Spirit, it teaches us that when the Spirit of God has been neglected He cannot be quickly reacquired. Not because the Spirit is unwilling to return, but because human character becomes set and a person cannot in a moment change that which a lifetime of neglect has made him. Readiness for the advent must be perpetual—not a last-minute, frantic search for the grace of God.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why did the wise virgins not share their supply of oil with those whose lamps were going out? Answer from the standpoint of spiritual experience. See Ezek. 14:14.**

"Every specification of this parable should be carefully studied. We are represented either by the wise or by the foolish virgins. There are many who will not remain at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him. They have not a knowledge of his ways; they are not prepared for his coming. They have made a pretense of waiting for their Lord. They have not watched and prayed with that faith which works by love and purifies the soul. They have

lived a life of carelessness. They have heard and assented to the truth, but they have never brought it into their practical life. The oil of grace is not feeding their lamps, and they are not prepared to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. The oil is the holy grace that is sent from heaven; and there must be an inward adorning with that grace, if we would stand when he appears."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Oct. 31, 1899.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 411, 412.

**Part 5**  
**OIL AND**  
**ACCEPTANCE**  
**OR REJECTION**  
**Matt. 25:10-12**

**"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."**

The five wise virgins went into the wedding because they had oil in reserve to refill their lamps. The believer will be ready for the advent because he has permitted the Holy Spirit to fill him and accomplish a deep and lasting work beyond that which was necessary to make him appear to men to be a Christian.

It was because the five foolish virgins lacked oil that they were not present when the wedding began. This represents professed believers who, lacking the Holy Spirit, will be excluded from Christ's kingdom.

► **How shall we receive the Spirit? Gal. 3:2, 5, 14.**

"Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, which is brought into the soul through faith in Jesus Christ. Those who earnestly search the Scriptures with much prayer, who rely upon God with firm faith, who obey His commandments, will be among those who are represented as wise virgins."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Sept. 17, 1895.

"Saddest of all words that ever fell on mortal ear are those words of doom, 'I know you not.' The fellowship of the Spirit [represented by the oil], which you have slighted, could alone make you one with the joyous throng at the marriage feast. In that scene you cannot participate. Its light would fall on blinded eyes, its melody upon deaf ears. Its love and joy could awake no chord of gladness in the world-benumbed heart. You are shut out from heaven by your own unfitness for its companionship."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 413.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is meant by the master of the feast not knowing the five foolish virgins? In what way does God not know a person?**

"The battle of Armageddon will be fought, and that day must find none of us sleeping. Wide awake we must be, as wise virgins having oil in our vessels with our lamps. . . .

be upon us, and the Captain of the Lord's host will stand at the head of the angels of heaven to direct the battle."  
 —Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 982.

"The power of the Holy Ghost must

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies to Ministers," pages 128-131.

November 24

**Part 6**  
**HAVE YOU OIL**  
**IN YOUR VESSELS**  
**WITH YOUR LAMPS?**  
**Matt. 25:13**

**"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."**

**Because the date of the coming of Jesus is unknown, the believer must be always ready by being filled with the oil of the Spirit.**

► **What is the source of eternal life for the believer? Gal. 6:8.**

"Now is the time to entreat that souls shall not only hear the word of God, but without delay secure oil in their vessels with their lamps. That oil is the righteousness of Christ. It represents character, and character is not transferable. No man can secure it for another. Each must obtain for himself a character purified from every stain of sin."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 233, 234.

The oil of the parable has been identified in this week's lesson in three ways—grace, Spirit, and the righteousness of Christ. This is not contradictory. It is expressive of three ways of looking at God's work for man. It is the oil of grace because the Spirit is undeserved; it is the oil of the Spirit because the Spirit is the direct means by which salvation is accomplished; it is the oil of the righteousness of Christ because the Spirit's presence in man is the reason for imputing, and the means of imparting, Christ's character to the believer. "The Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, makes him complete in Christ."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Sept. 17, 1895.

This parable teaches that it is foolish to neglect to be filled with the Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ, for it will result in exclusion from the kingdom; it is wise to have faith in Jesus Christ and thus be filled with the Spirit, for it will result in acceptance into the kingdom.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Am I wise or foolish? Review what it means to be ready for the coming of Jesus.**

"What is our position in the world? We are in the waiting time. But this period is not to be spent in abstract devotion. Waiting, watching, and vigilant working are to be combined. Our life should not be all bustle and drive and planning about the things of the world, to the neglect of personal piety and of the service that God requires.

While we should not be slothful in business, we should be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. The lamp of the soul must be trimmed, and we must have the oil of grace in our vessels with our lamps. Every precaution must be used to prevent spiritual declension, lest the day of the Lord overtake us as a thief."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 276.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 413-421.

## Have You Oil in Your Vessels With Your Lamps?

"Though five of these virgins are represented as wise and five as foolish, all had lamps. They had all been convicted that they must prepare for the coming of the bridegroom, and all had gained a knowledge of the truth. There was no apparent difference between the wise and the foolish until the cry was made, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him;' but the true state of things was then developed. The wise had taken precautions to carry oil with them in their vessels, so that their lamps that were beginning to burn dimly might be replenished with oil; but the foolish had not provided for this emergency, and now they made an earnest, distressed petition to those who were wise. 'And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.' They had neglected to prepare themselves to meet the bridegroom, and now turned to those who had provided themselves with oil. 'But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.'

"In reading this parable one cannot but pity the foolish virgins, and ask the question, Why is it that the wise did not divide their supply of oil? But as we make the spiritual application of the parable, we can see the reason. It is not possible for those who have faith and grace to divide their supply with those who have not. It is not possible for those who have made a thorough heart work, to impart the benefit of this to those who have done but surface work. The parable is designed to point out the peril of doing a surface work. Many profess to be Christians, and for a time their half-heartedness is not discerned. The difference between them and those who are truly pious is not made apparent. This parable should awaken solemn reflections. Considering it we should ask ourselves, Are we

doers of the words of Christ? Are we building on the rock? Are we, in our probationary time, making our calling and election sure? We should not soothe our consciences in expectation of heaven, when we are not bearing the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian life. Paul says, 'examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?'

"All the ten virgins appeared to be ready for the coming of the bridegroom, and yet the test brought out the fact that five were unready. Those who have true piety esteem and revere the law of God. Through the grace of Christ they exemplify the principles of the law in their lives, and will not willfully break any of the commandments of God. They realize that 'to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.' They yield to Christ, who leads men to repentance of sin, who pardons the penitent soul, and clothes him with his own righteousness. The converted soul has a hatred of sin; he does not indulge in self-complacency, self-love, self-sufficiency, nor pass on day after day, claiming to be a Christian, and yet bringing dishonor upon Christ by misrepresenting him in character. Those who make this mistake, and pass on filled with self-righteousness, have not in reality made the first step heavenward. The first step toward heaven is conviction of sin, the second is repentance and obedience. True piety never exalts self.

"The foolish virgins do not represent those who are hypocritical. They had a regard for truth, they advocated the truth, they were intending to go forth to meet the bridegroom. They are attached to those who believe the truth, and go with them, having lamps, which represent a knowledge of the truth. When there was a revival in the church,

their feelings were stirred; but they failed to have oil in their vessels, because they did not bring the principles of godliness into their daily life and character. They did not fall upon the rock Christ Jesus, and permit their old nature to be broken up. This class is represented also by the stony-ground hearers. Christ said: 'Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside; and the fowls came and devoured them up; some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.' Jesus explains these stonyground hearers, and says, 'But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.'

"Many receive the truth readily, but they fail to assimilate truth, and its influence is not abiding. They are like the foolish virgins, who had no oil in their vessels with their lamps. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, which is brought into the soul through faith in Jesus Christ. Those who earnestly search the Scriptures with much prayer, who rely upon God with firm faith, who obey his commandments, will be among those who are represented as wise virgins. The teachings of the word of God are not yea and nay, but yea and amen. The requirement of the gospel is far-reaching. Says the apostle, 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' Practical piety will not be attained by giving the grand truths of the Bible a place in the outer courts of the heart. The religion of the Bible must be brought into the large and the little affairs of life. It must furnish the powerful motives and prin-

ciples that will regulate the Christian's character and course of action.

"Human nature is depraved, and is justly condemned by a holy God. But provision is made for the repenting sinner, so that by faith in the atonement of the only begotten Son of God, he may receive forgiveness of sin, find justification, receive adoption into the heavenly family, and become an inheritor of the kingdom of God. Transformation of character is wrought through the operation of the Holy Spirit, which works upon the human agent, implanting in him, according to his desire and consent to have it done, a new nature. The image of God is restored to the soul, and day by day he is strengthened and renewed by grace, and is enabled more and more perfectly to reflect the character of Christ in righteousness and true holiness.

"The oil so much needed by those who are represented as foolish virgins, is not something to be put on the outside. They need to bring the truth into the sanctuary of the soul, that it may cleanse, refine, and sanctify. It is not theory that they need; it is the sacred teachings of the Bible, which are not uncertain, disconnected doctrines, but are living truths, that involve eternal interests that center in Christ. In him is the complete system of divine truth. The salvation of the soul, through faith in Christ, is the ground and pillar of the truth. Those who exercise true faith in Christ make it manifest by holiness of character, by obedience to the law of God. They realize that the truth as it is in Jesus reaches heaven, and compasses eternity. They understand that the Christian's character should represent the character of Christ, and be full of grace and truth. To them is imparted the oil of grace, which sustains a never-failing light. The Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, makes him complete in Christ. It is not a decided evidence that a man or a woman is a Christian because he manifests deep emotion when

under exciting circumstances. He who is Christlike has a deep, determined, persevering element in his soul, and yet has a sense of his own weakness, and is not deceived and misled by the Devil, and made to trust in himself. He has a knowledge of the word of God, and knows that he is safe only as he places his hand in the hand of Jesus Christ, and keeps firm hold upon him.

"Character is revealed by a crisis. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,' the sleeping virgins roused from their slumbers, and it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares, but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. Character is revealed by circumstances. Emergencies bring out the true metal of character. Some sudden and unlooked-for calamity, bereavement, or crisis, some unexpected sickness or anguish, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will bring out the true inwardness of the character. It will be made manifest whether or not there is any real faith in the promises of the word of God. It will be made manifest whether or not the soul is sustained by grace, whether there is oil in the vessel with the lamp.

"Testing times come to all. How do we conduct ourselves under the test and proving of God? Do our lamps go out? or do we still keep them burning? Are we prepared for every emergency by our connection with Him who is full of grace and truth? The five wise virgins could not impart their character to the five foolish virgins. Character must be formed by us as individuals. It cannot be transferred to another, even if the possessor were willing to make the sacrifice. There is much we can do for each other while mercy still lingers. We can represent the character of Christ. We can give faithful warnings to the erring. We can reprove, rebuke,

with all long-suffering and doctrine, bringing the doctrines of Holy Writ home to the heart. We can give heartfelt sympathy. We can pray with and for one another. By living a circumspect life, by maintaining a holy conversation, we may give an example of what a Christian should be; but no person can give to another his own mold of character. Let us duly consider the fact that we are to be saved, not as companies, but as individuals. We shall be judged according to the character we have formed. It is perilous to neglect to prepare the soul for eternity, and to put off making our peace with God until upon a dying bed. It is by the daily transactions of life, by the spirit we manifest, that we determine our eternal destiny. He who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. If we have made Christ our pattern, if we have walked and worked as he has given us an example in his own life, we shall be able to meet the solemn surprises that will come upon us in our experience, and say from our heart, 'Not my will, but thine, be done.'

"It is in probationary time, the time in which we are living, that we should calmly contemplate the terms of salvation, and live according to the conditions laid down in the word of God. We should educate and train ourselves, hour by hour and day by day, by careful discipline, to perform every duty. We should become acquainted with God and with Jesus Christ whom he has sent. In every trial it is our privilege to draw upon him who has said, 'Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.' The Lord says he is more willing to give us the Holy Spirit than parents are to give bread to their children. Then let us have the oil of grace in our vessels with our lamps, that we may not be found among those who are represented as foolish virgins, who were not prepared to go forth to meet the bridegroom."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Sept. 17, 1895.

November 26 to December 2



## WATCHING OR NOT WATCHING? 9

**"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matt. 25:21.**

The parable of the virgins taught, as we studied last week, what it means for the believer to be ready for Jesus' coming. Because this readiness is for an event of unknown date, it is not only a matter of getting ready but also of remaining ready for Jesus' coming. It was on this point that the foolish virgins failed. Jesus concluded from the parable that watching was necessary also (Matt. 25:13), and this idea is the transition thought between the parables of the virgins and of the talents. In the parable of the talents "He showed what it means to watch for His coming."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 325.

In the parable of the virgins the time of waiting for the advent was empty—the girls were sleeping. But in the parable of the talents it is this empty place that is now filled in. It teaches what the disciple is to be doing while he watches for his Lord's return.

"While the virgins were represented as *waiting* for their Lord, we have here the servants *working* for Him. There the inward spiritual life of the faithful was described, here their external activity. There, by the fate of the foolish virgins, we were warned against negligence and decays in the inner life; here, by the doom of the slothful servant, against indolence in our outward vocation and work. That parable enforced the need of keeping the heart with all diligence; this of putting all diligence also into our outward service, if we would give our account with joy and not with sorrow. Very fitly, therefore, the other

precedes, and this follows, since the maintenance of the life of God in the heart is the sole condition of a profitable outward activity for the kingdom of God."—Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, page 209.

An article by Ellen G. White, "Workers With God," appears on pages 73-75 of this quarterly. It was originally published in the *Review and Herald* and is reprinted here for reading in conjunction with this week's lesson.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Central Teaching**  
Matt. 25:14, 15, 19
2. **The Meaning of the Talents**  
Mark 1:14, 15; 16:15
3. **The Distribution of the Talents**  
Matt. 25:14, 15
4. **The Increase of the Talents**  
Matt. 25:16-18
5. **The Accounting for Talents**  
Matt. 25:19-21
6. **To Have and to Have Not**  
Matt. 25:28, 29

November 26

**Part 1**  
**CENTRAL TEACHING**  
**Matt. 25:14, 15, 19**

**"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them."**

► **Whom do the master and servants represent? Read Acts 1:8-11 and compare it with the parable.**

► **What is the key feature of this parable? Matt. 25:15, 20.**

All of the details of the parable are essential to making the story, but the teaching of the parable hinges on the talents. It is how the servants relate themselves to the talents that determines their destinies. To have an increase of talents is commendable; to have no increase of talents is reprehensible. To have increase is reason for promotion; to have no increase is reason for discharge from duty. To have increase is to have watched; to have no increase is not to have watched.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Read Matt. 25:13-30 twice, learn the details of the parable, and reflect on it in the light of Matthew 24.**

"The parable of the talents should receive prayerful, critical attention. By it we are shown the importance of trading diligently and conscientiously on our Lord's goods. Not one thread of selfishness is to be woven into his work. Worldly ambition is not to be cherished. We are to keep self out of sight, holding Christ before the world. We are to bring glory to God by doing our best to be perfect men and perfect women.

"Christ gave the parable of the talents to show us that all the blessings we have come from God. Our gifts belong to him. They are not to be used according to human judgment, but according to the directions given in God's Word. We are to study how we may use these gifts for the up-building of the cause of truth."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," June 27, 1907.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 325, 326.

November 27

**Part 2**  
**THE MEANING**  
**OF THE TALENTS**  
Mark 1:14, 15; 16:15

► **What business of Jesus Christ was placed in the hands of His servants just before His ascension?**

**"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."**

**"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."**

As it was the business of the man in the parable to invest money, so it is the business of Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to the people of this world. As the master went on a journey, so Jesus has gone to His Father. As the master returned, so will Jesus return. But what is the equivalent in experience of the talents in the parable?

The talents of the parable should not be confused with the present-day usage of talent as ability. The talents given to the servants were money. A worker today working at minimum wage would earn about \$75,000 in the time that a worker in the first century would earn the equivalent of one talent. Thus, even the man with one talent was given a considerable sum of money. The man with five talents received a sum equivalent to about \$375,000. These talents, money, were the medium through which the servants conducted the master's business.

► **What was the means provided by Jesus for doing the work of the gospel? Acts 1:4, 8.**

"The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 327. But the talents given required the action of the servants to secure increase.

In this week's lesson we will study this main idea of the parable—the Holy Spirit and the cooperation of the believer in doing the work of the gospel.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the role of the Spirit in Christian work and activity?**

"The tastes are to be elevated, the appetite subdued, by those who are seeking for the eternal inheritance, a life which measures with the life of God. The gospel demands an unre-served surrender of body and soul, with all their energies and capabilities. The

Lord claims all the service which any human being, aided and enriched by divine grace, can render; and to withhold this from Him is robbery."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," April 9, 1901.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 327, 328.

**Part 3**  
**THE DISTRIBUTION**  
**OF THE TALENTS**  
**Matt. 25:14, 15**

► **What determined the amount of money entrusted to each servant?**

**"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey."**

If the talents were interpreted as representing human abilities, a problem is created: The talents were distributed according to ability, which would then be saying that each man receives ability according to his ability. Such a statement has no meaning. But are not human abilities the means of preaching the gospel? Yes, but only partially.

"The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 328.

From the above quotation it becomes clear that it is necessary to think of two kinds of abilities—the natural abilities that one possesses as a human being and the human abilities that are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The talents do not represent the human ability that every person in the world has. This is a parable of servants of Jesus Christ whose human ability has been surrendered to Him. He sanctifies this ability by the Holy Spirit and returns it to the Christian believer to be used in doing His work. To receive talents according to ability then must mean that the amount of sanctified ability that a person receives is equal to the amount of natural ability that he possesses.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is sanctified ability? How does it differ from human, natural ability?**

"It is only when brought under full control of the Spirit of God that the talents of an individual are rendered useful to the fullest extent. The precepts and principles of religion are the first steps in the acquisition of knowledge, and lie at the very foundation of true education. Knowledge and science must be vitalized by the Spirit of God in

order to serve the noblest purposes. The Christian alone can make the right use of knowledge. Science, in order to be fully appreciated, must be viewed from a religious standpoint. The heart which is ennobled by the grace of God can best comprehend the real value of education."—"Testimonies," Vol. 4, p. 427.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 329-332.

November 29

**Part 4**  
**THE INCREASE**  
**OF THE TALENTS**  
**Matt. 25:16-18**

► **What were the two types of results of the entrusted money?**

**"Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money."**

The parable here teaches us that in doing the work of Christ with sanctified ability there is an increase of sanctified ability. This is possible not only because from a human standpoint "practice makes perfect," but because the human being and the Holy Spirit are in cooperation. Thus there is power from outside of man working in him to make him more competent in Christ's work than he was at the beginning or could ever become by his own unaided effort.

The man who hid his money in the earth is not a worldling. He is one who has surrendered his life to Christ, or he would have received no talent. Christ has worked in his life, but his problem is that he did not continue by cooperating with the Spirit in doing Christ's work. There was no increase. The money was hid in the earth for safekeeping. His sanctified ability was absorbed by the world, and not by the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And the world's methods cannot increase sanctified ability.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the responsibility of the person for the increase of the abilities God has given?**

"Talents used are talents multiplied. Success is not the result of chance or of destiny; it is the outworking of God's own providence, the reward of faith and discretion, of virtue and persevering effort. The Lord desires us to use every gift we have; and if we do this, we shall have greater gifts to use. He does not supernaturally endow us with the qualifications we lack; but while we use that which we have, He will work with us to increase and strengthen every faculty. By every wholehearted, earnest sacrifice for the Master's service

our powers will increase. While we yield ourselves as instruments for the Holy Spirit's working, the grace of God works in us to deny old inclinations, to overcome powerful propensities, and to form new habits. As we cherish and obey the promptings of the Spirit, our hearts are enlarged to receive more and more of His power, and to do more and better work. Dormant energies are aroused, and palsied faculties receive new life."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 353, 354.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 353-355.

**Part 5**  
**THE ACCOUNTING**  
**FOR TALENTS**  
**Matt. 25:19-21**

**"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Read also Matt. 25:22-28.)**

The return of the master corresponds to the return of Jesus at the unknown time. What each servant presents to the master is the initial gift and the increase of sanctified ability. In actual experience this has been accomplished through the Spirit, and it is this fact that makes the subsequent welcome into the kingdom the result of righteousness by faith. "All that He claims from us we through divine grace can render."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 362.

"It is the faithfulness, the loyalty to God, the loving service, that wins the divine approval. Every impulse of the Holy Spirit leading men to goodness and to God, is noted in the books of heaven, and in the day of God the workers through whom He has wrought will be commended."—*Ibid.*, p. 361.

The man without increase did everything from a self-centered viewpoint. He was not concerned for his master's business, but for his own standing with the master. To use Christ's gifts selfishly is a contradiction. But the one-talent servant tried to overcome the contradiction by stressing preservation of his ability instead of increase; his work, instead of the Spirit's work in him. On this basis he was seeking the kingdom by self-righteousness, and the master excluded him.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the relationship between the work for the Master and acceptance into the kingdom? Think carefully.**

"At the final day, we shall be approved or condemned according to our works. The Judge of all the earth will render a just decision. He will not be bribed; he cannot be deceived. He who made man, and whose are the worlds and all the treasures they contain—he it is who weighs character in the balance of eternal justice.

"Would that we as a people might realize how much is pending upon our earnestness and fidelity in the service of Christ. All who realize their accountability to God, will be burden-bearers

in the church. There can be no such thing as a lazy Christian, though there are many indolent professors of Christianity. While Christ's followers will realize their own weakness, they will cry earnestly to God for strength, that they may be workers together with him. They will constantly seek to become better men and better women, that they may more faithfully perform the work which he has committed to their hands."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Jan. 19, 1886.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 360-364.**

December 1

**Part 6**  
**TO HAVE AND**  
**TO HAVE NOT**  
**Matt. 25:28, 29**

**"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."**

This text may sound puzzling, but if interpreted in the context it is clear. That which the faithful servants had which the unfaithful had not was increase of money. All who had an increase were given rewards. The one without increase to all intents and purposes had nothing at all, for the results to the master were the same as if he had had nothing. From the standpoint of Christian experience there is a sense in which he never even had the one talent. He never made it his own by use. He was so loosely attached to the sanctified ability that it can be said he didn't have it; but it had been given to him, and so it can also be said that he did have it.

This parable teaches us that faithful watching for the advent is self-development through the Spirit to God's glory, and it will result in eternal life; unfaithful watching for the advent is neglect of self-development through the Spirit to God's glory, and it will result in destruction.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the significance of the statement that the servant with ten talents benefited from the talent taken away from the unfaithful servant?**

"Employed to bless others, his gifts increase. Shut up to self-serving they diminish, and are finally withdrawn. He who refuses to impart that which he has received will at last find that he has nothing to give. He is consenting to a process that surely dwarfs and finally destroys the faculties of the soul.

"Let none suppose that they can live a life of selfishness, and then, having served their own interests, enter into the joy of their Lord. In the joy of unselfish love they could not participate. They would not be fitted for the heavenly courts. They could not appreciate

the pure atmosphere of love that pervades heaven. The voices of the angels and the music of their harps would not satisfy them. To their minds the science of heaven would be as an enigma.

"In the great judgment day those who have not worked for Christ, those who have drifted along, carrying no responsibility, thinking of themselves, pleasing themselves, will be placed by the Judge of all the earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 364, 365.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 364, 365.

## Workers With God

"God's blessings are not bestowed upon men independent of human effort. We see this principle illustrated in the natural world. God has given us the earth with its treasures. He causes it to bring forth food for man and beast, he sends the recurring seasons, he gives the sunshine, the dew, and the rain; yet man is required to act his part; he must co-operate with God's plan by diligent, painstaking effort. The plough must break up the soil, the seed must be sown, the field must be tilled, or there will be no harvest.

"So in the spiritual world. All that we possess, whether of talents, of influence, or of means, is of God; we can accomplish nothing without divine aid. Yet we are not released from the necessity of effort. While salvation is the gift of God, man has a part to act in the carrying out of the plan of redemption. God has chosen to use men as his instruments, to employ human agencies in the accomplishment of his purposes. He has ordained to unite divine power with human endeavor, in the work of saving souls. Thus we become laborers together with God. We have a grand and important work, because it is a part of God's great plan for the redemption of man. It is a high honor bestowed upon finite beings thus to co-operate with the Majesty of heaven.

"God is not dependent upon men for the advancement of his cause. He might have made angels the ambassadors of his truth. He might have made known his will, as he proclaimed the law from Sinai with his own voice. But in order to cultivate a spirit of benevolence in us, he has chosen to employ men to do this work. Every act of self-sacrifice for the good of others will strengthen the spirit of beneficence in the giver's heart, allying him more closely to the Redeemer of the world, who 'was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' And it is only as we fulfill the divine purpose in our creation that life can be

a blessing to us. All the good gifts of God to man will prove only a curse, unless he employs them to bless his fellow men, and for the advancement of God's cause in the earth.

"The spirit of benevolence is the spirit of heaven. The spirit of selfishness is the spirit of Satan. Christ's self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. He gave all he had, and then gave himself that man might be saved. The cross of Christ appeals to the benevolence of every follower of the blessed Saviour. The principle illustrated there is to give, give. This carried out in good works is the true fruit of the Christian life. The principle of worldliness is to get, get, and thus people expect to secure happiness; but carried out in all its bearings, its fruit is misery and death.

"Selfishness is the strongest and most general of human impulses, the struggle of the soul between sympathy and covetousness is an unequal contest; for while selfishness is the strongest passion, love and benevolence are too often the weakest, and as a rule the evil gains the victory. Therefore in our labors and gifts for God's cause, it is unsafe to be controlled by feeling or impulse. To give or to labor when our sympathies are moved, and to withhold our gifts or service when the emotions are not stirred, is an unwise and dangerous course. If we are controlled by impulse or mere human sympathy, then a few instances where our efforts for others are repaid with ingratitude, or where our gifts are abused or squandered, will be sufficient to freeze up the springs of beneficence.

"Christians should act from fixed principle, following the Saviour's example of self-denial and self-sacrifice. What if Christ had left his work, becoming weary because of the ingratitude and abuse that met him on every side? What if he had returned to heaven discouraged by his reception? We are reaping the fruits of his infinite self-

sacrifice; and yet when labor is to be done, when our help is needed in the work of the Redeemer in the salvation of souls, we shrink from duty and pray to be excused. Ignoble sloth, careless indifference, and wicked selfishness seal our senses to the claims of God.

"How does God regard our ingratitude and lack of appreciation of his blessings? When we see one slight or misuse our gifts, our hearts and hands are closed against him. But those who received God's merciful gifts day after day, and year after year, misapply his bounties, and neglect the souls for whom Christ has given his life. The means which he has lent them to sustain his cause and build up his kingdom are invested in houses and lands, lavished on pride and self-indulgence, and the Giver is forgotten. The truth which is designed of God to be carried to all nations is impeded in its course, because the money that is needed for the work is expended on selfish gratifications. The gifts of heaven, if employed for the purpose for which they were bestowed, would bring many sons and daughters to God. But vanity and extravagant display grasp everything within their reach to build up and glorify self, and many souls are lost because of this neglect.

"By their abuse of God's gifts in this life, many are proving themselves unworthy of eternal life. The powers of the mind and the affections of the soul are selfishly diverted from the channel in which God would have them flow. These persons do not appreciate the great salvation brought within their reach, or they would unite with Christ in his work. Their interest is not in that direction, but centered upon self. Their treasure is not laid up in heaven but on the earth, and they mind earthly things. . . .

"You who claim to believe the truth, to be waiting for the appearing of our Lord in the clouds of heaven, waiting to be translated to the mansions Christ has given his life to purchase, how

much, I ask, do you love his appearing? How much do you value eternal above temporal things?—Just as much as your works show, and no more. Brethren and sisters, 'the night is far spent, the day is at hand.' I call upon you to awake out of sleep. Let every church arouse and put away their pride and vanity and worldliness. Let them humble their hearts before God by repentance that they have lifted so few burdens for Christ.

"Did we realize that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God, we would work from altogether a higher stand-point. God despises a dead offering; he requires a living sacrifice, with intellect, sensibilities, and will, fully enlisted in his service. Every distinctive faculty should be devoted to this work,—our feet swift to move at the call of duty, our hands ready to act when work is to be done, our lips prepared to speak the truth in love, and show forth the praise of Him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. We should continue this consecration, not taking anything from the altar; for this is sacrilege. When his people thus consecrate themselves in sincerity and humility, they are accepted of God; and they become to him a sweet-smelling savor, diffusing a rich fragrance throughout all the earth.

"To us as a people God has committed great and solemn truths, not merely to be enjoyed by ourselves, but to be given to others. The banner of truth must be unfurled in every nation. The message of warning must be proclaimed to every tongue and people. But this work is still far from being accomplished. I am pained as I see the condition of things in Europe. Something has been accomplished, and the angels are still holding the four winds that a far greater work may be done; but there is so great poverty and actual want that the truth makes slow progress. In how many countries has the message as yet only found an entrance! In how

many cities is there not even one soul that has heard the proclamation of the Third Angel's Message! Angels of God are moving upon minds, and preparing the way for the reception of the truth. From every side the Macedonian cry is heard, 'Come over and help us.' But the work is hindered for lack of workers and for lack of means.

"The people of God are not half awake. A stupor seems to be paralyzing their sensibilities. Each of us will soon have to stand before the Judge of all the earth, to answer for the deeds done in the body. All will then have to give an account for the good they might have done, but did not do because they were not so closely connected with God that they could know his will and understand his claims upon them. If the money that has been expended annually by our brethren in selfish gratification had been placed in the mission treasury, where there is now one missionary in the field there might be one hundred. Who will have to render an account for this great lack of funds? Many of our American brethren have done nobly and willingly for the advancement of the truth in Europe, but there is a great work yet to be done. Many who have given liberally could do more, and others should now come forward and bear their share of the burden. Now is the time when houses and lands should be converted into mission funds. Men are to be educated and disciplined. We feel alarmed as we see the little that is being done, when we have a world-wide message, and the end of all things is at hand.

"The voice of Providence is calling upon all who have the love of God in their hearts to arouse to this great emergency. Never was there a time when so much was at stake as to-day. Never was there a period in which greater energy and self-sacrifice were demanded of God's commandment-keeping people. If there was ever need of economy and self-denial, it is now. There should be no extravagance in

dress, no useless expenditure for self-indulgence or display. Let our means and our labors be devoted to the cause of God, to save souls for whom Christ died.

"As the holidays are approaching, I appeal to you, instead of making gifts to your friends, to bring your offerings to God. Let us show that we appreciate the great plan of redemption. As God has given us all Heaven in the gift of his dear Son, let us express our gratitude by thank-offerings to his cause. Let the evergreen Christmas trees yield a rich harvest for God.

"I present before you our missions in foreign lands as the object of your gifts. Let us show that we value the precious light of truth by making a sacrifice to extend the light to those who are in darkness. Through our self-denial and sacrifice, lands that have never heard the truth may hear it. They may become vocal with the praise of God, and from them many voices may be lifted to swell the last note of warning. Let every church, every family, join in this work. Let every child take a part, bringing some offering as the result of his own industry and self-denial. The Saviour will accept the free-will offerings of every one. Gifts which are the fruit of self-denial to extend the precious light of truth, will be as fragrant incense before God.

"Have we been forgetful of God's goodness in the past, we have now a precious opportunity to redeem these neglects. Let us upon the coming Christmas and New Year's not only make an offering to him of our means, but give ourselves to him in willing service. To each of us, from the oldest to the youngest, is granted the privilege of becoming workers together with God. Christ is soon to come in the clouds of heaven to reward every one according to his works. To whom will it then be said, 'Ye have done what ye could'?" —Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Dec. 7, 1886.



## FAITHFUL OR UNFAITHFUL?

# 10

**"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25:40.**

The parable of the judgment scene is related to the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25 in at least three ways. (1) The event presented in this parable is to take place "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him." Matt. 25:31. This is the same event that Jesus taught in Matt. 24:30-33 was pointed to by the signs. (2) In the parables of Matthew 24 and 25 Jesus referred to a division of people. Of those in the field and at the mill "one shall be taken and the other left." In the story of the faithful and evil servants the first was promoted, the other punished. Five of the bridesmaids went to the wedding and five were excluded. In the story of the talents the faithful servants were commended and promoted, the unfaithful servant was rebuked, discharged, and punished. In each case a judgment is taught but the nature of the judgment is not revealed. This parable explains what the judgment is about. (3) In the parable of the talents the division was on the basis of faithfulness-unfaithfulness. In last week's lesson we noted that this faithfulness or unfaithfulness was doing or not doing the work of the kingdom of heaven according to one's sanctified ability; but the work of the kingdom was not explained. In other words, the question was never answered, "What does it mean to be faithful?" The story of the talents teaches the meaning of watching for

the advent. The story of the judgment teaches the meaning of faithfulness while waiting for the advent.

An article by Ellen G. White, "Duty to the Poor, the Erring, and the Wandering," appears on pages 83-85 of this quarterly. It was originally published in the *Review and Herald* and is reprinted here for reading in conjunction with this week's lesson.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Scene**  
Matt. 25:31, 32
2. **The Sheep**  
Verses 33, 34
3. **The Goats**  
Verses 41-43
4. **Identity With Christ**  
Verses 40, 45
5. **The Rewards**  
Verses 34, 46
6. **The Parable and the Advent**  
Verses 31, 32

**Part 1**  
**THE SCENE**  
**Matt. 25:31, 32**

**"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."**

The event pictured here is the second coming of Jesus. A decision as to who is redeemed has previously been made in the investigative judgment, but it is at His appearing that the decision is carried out. This is not the judgment at the close of the millennium, because that is the judgment of the wicked only. It is at the second coming that the separation of the redeemed from the unredeemed takes place, with the redeemed accompanying Christ on His return to heaven and the unredeemed remaining on this earth.

Christ is the Shepherd of the whole world—of the sheep and the goats. The parable of the bridesmaids and the parable of the talents dealt with two kinds of Christians. The parable of the judgment scene represents the whole world, thus presenting just two basic kinds of people. Therefore the rejected "Christians" in the two previous parables are shown to belong with the goats—the world's total unredeemed population.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the significance of Christ being Shepherd of all the nations?**

"Christ would have all understand the events of His second appearing. The judgment scene will take place in the presence of all the worlds; for in this judgment the government of God will be vindicated, and His law will stand forth as 'holy, and just, and good.' Then every case will be decided, and sen-

tence will be passed upon all. Sin will not then appear attractive, but will be seen in all its hideous magnitude. All will see the relation in which they stand to God and to one another."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 986.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "The Great Controversy," page 322; "The Desire of Ages," page 637.

**Part 2**  
**THE SHEEP**  
**Matt. 25:33, 34**

**"And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."**

**"Inherit.** To inherit is to enter into possession of property. Man was originally appointed king of this world (Gen. 1:28), but lost his dominion as a result of sin. Daniel looked forward to the time when the saints would once more inherit the eternal kingdom originally planned for them (Dan. 7:27)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Matt. 25:34.

► **What was the distinguishing characteristic of the sheep in the parable? Matt. 25:35, 36, 40.**

The persons represented as sheep are loving persons. They not only feel concern for those in need, but supply the need. Thus love is seen to be active. It is this active concern for the temporal and eternal welfare of the fellowman that is the characteristic of the redeemed. "When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 637.

► **What truth do you see in the following texts? John 17:3; 1 John 4:7.**

Love is the root both of God's character and of His intention for the character of man. When men love God and their fellowmen, it is evidence that He is succeeding in His work within them by the Holy Spirit. The parable of the judgment scene presents basically the same truth that Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 13.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**The word "love" is used for many meanings. In the best and highest sense what is love?**

"God requires His people to be far more pitiful and considerate of the unfortunate than they are. . . . God requires that the same consideration which should be given to the widow and fatherless be given to the blind and to those suffering under the affliction of other physical infirmities. Disinterested benevolence is very rare in this age of the world. . . . It is strange that

professed Christian men should disregard the plain, positive teachings of the Word of God and feel no compunction of conscience. God places upon them the responsibility of caring for the unfortunate, the blind, the lame, the widow, and the fatherless; but many make no effort to regard it."—Ellen G. White, "My Life Today," page 243.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Desire of Ages," pages 638-641.

**Part 3**  
**THE GOATS**  
**Matt. 25:41-43**

► For what are those on the Shepherd's left hand condemned?

**"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."**

As those who have done loving deeds are accepted, so those who have neglected to do loving deeds are rejected. The doers are lovers, and the non-doers are self-seekers. These have followed the principle of Lucifer, who sought his own exaltation. Those on Christ's left hand are not accused of crimes and foul deeds. They may or may not have been guilty of these, but that is a secondary consideration. The basic motivating power of their lives has been selfishness, and they are rejected in the judgment because they have not a loving character like that of Christ. Their ministry has been to self and not to others.

"Only when selfishness is dead, when strife for supremacy is banished, when gratitude fills the heart, and love makes fragrant the life—it is only then that Christ is abiding in the soul, and we are recognized as laborers together with God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 402.

"Whatever work we do, we are to do it for Christ. There are many kinds of temporal work to be done for God. An unbeliever would do this work mechanically, for the wages he receives. He does not know the joy of cooperation with the Master Worker. There is no spirituality in the work of him who serves self. Common motives, common aspirations, common inspirations, a desire to be thought clever by men, rule in his life. Such a one may receive praise from men, but not from God. Those who are truly united with Christ do not work for the wages they receive. Laborers together with God, they do not strive to exalt self."—*Medical Ministry*, page 133.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why are the unredeemed excluded from the kingdom?**

"However short our service or humble our work, if in simple faith we follow Christ, we shall not be disappointed of the reward. That which even the greatest and wisest cannot earn, the weakest and most humble may receive. Heaven's golden gate opens not to the self-exalted. It is not lifted up to the

proud in spirit. But the everlasting portals will open wide to the trembling touch of a little child. Blessed will be the recompense of grace to those who have wrought for God in the simplicity of faith and love."—"*Christ's Object Lessons*," page 404.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 149-152.

**Part 4**  
**IDENTITY WITH**  
**CHRIST**  
**Matt. 25:40, 45**

**"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."**

Christ's reference to brethren in verse 40 does not indicate that His close identity is only with believers. "But not to any class is Christ's love restricted. He identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints. The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 638.

It is this identity of Jesus with human beings that makes justification possible to those who choose to identify themselves with Christ.

"When this intimacy of connection and communion [faith] is formed, our sins are laid upon Christ; His righteousness is imputed to us. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We have access to God through Him; we are accepted in the Beloved. Whoever by word or deed injures a believer thereby wounds Jesus. Whoever gives a cup of cold water to a disciple because he is a child of God will be regarded by Christ as giving to Him."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 229.

Those on Christ's left hand are lost because they have never identified themselves with Christ. Those on the right hand are redeemed and their concerns and Christ's concerns coincide. This is the goal of grace.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How can I identify with Christ as near as possible to the way He identifies with me?**

"Every act, every deed of justice and mercy and benevolence, makes music in heaven. The Father from His throne beholds and numbers the performer of them with His most precious treasures. 'And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, when I make up My jewels.' Every merciful act to the needy or the suffering is as though done to Jesus. Whoever succors the poor, or sympathizes with the afflicted and oppressed,

and befriends the orphan, brings himself into a more close relationship to Jesus.

"Christ regards all acts of mercy, benevolence, and thoughtful consideration for the unfortunate, the blind, the lame, the sick, the widow, and the orphan, as done to Himself; and these works are preserved in the heavenly records, and will be rewarded."—*"Christian Service,"* page 268.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly," pages 83-85.

**Part 5**  
**THE REWARDS**  
**Matt. 25:34, 46**

**"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "And these [on the left hand] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."**

The rewards given to the "sheep and the goats" are based on what each is. Jesus calls the sheep the "blessed of my Father" because under God's blessing of grace they have developed characters like the Father's. The work they do is in harmony with the Father's work, and they work from the same loving, selfless motivation. They enter the kingdom because the principles of the kingdom are within them. They belong to it.

The "goats" are pronounced cursed instead of blessed because they are in their own existence a curse. Self is their center, and the needs of others are neglected. Having refused God's grace, they have developed characters like those of the devil and his angels. The work they do is in harmony with the devil's work, and they work from the same selfish, rebellious motivation. They are excluded from the kingdom because they have rejected the principles of the kingdom, love for God and man. They would be misfits in heaven and would start a new rebellion.

None of those in either group recognize their actions as having been done to Christ. It appears that this aspect of the parable shows that human beings do not comprehend the close, intimate attachment of Jesus to the people of this world.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How does righteousness by faith harmonize with the picture of actions and rewards in this parable?**

"In the last great day decisions will be made that will be a surprise to many. Human judgment will have no place in the decisions then made. Christ can and will judge every case; for all judgment has been committed to Him by the Father. He will estimate service by that which is invisible to men. The most secret things lie open to His all-seeing eye. When the Judge of all men shall make His investigation, many of those whom human estimation has placed first will be placed last, and those who have been put in the lowest place by men will be taken out of the

ranks and made first."—"Medical Ministry," page 133.

"Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, 'Love one another, as I have loved you' (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts."—"The Desire of Ages," page 641.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 2, pp. 24, 25.

**Part 6**  
**THE PARABLE AND**  
**THE ADVENT**  
**Matt. 25:31, 32**

**"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."**

In the parable of the judgment scene Jesus gave a *preview* of what will happen at the judgment. But the judgment is a *review* of each human being's life. In this parable Jesus ties the human actions of today to the events in connection with the second advent. The central thrust of the parable, then, is not only a revelation of a future event, but a portrayal of how to live in the present in preparation for the judgment.

How shall men await Christ's appearing and the judgment? In ministering to human need. That is the content of the work of the Master that the parable of the talents taught was to be done faithfully. It is an enlargement on the meaning of watching.

A review of the meanings of the three parables of Matthew 25 can be instructive. The parable of the bridesmaids teaches the relation of the Christian, the Word, and the Spirit to readiness. The parable of the talents teaches the relation of doing the Master's work faithfully, through the Spirit, to watchfulness. The description of the judgment scene teaches that the content of Christ's work was loving ministry to needy persons. The total impact of these three parables is that the Christian is to live his life—spiritually, vocationally, socially—in reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How do these parables relate to the development of a last generation?**

"The character which we now manifest is deciding our future destiny. The happiness of heaven will be found by conforming to the will of God, and if men become members of the royal family in heaven, it will be because heaven has begun with them on earth. . . . The righteous will take every grace, every precious, sanctified ability, into the courts above, and exchange earth

for heaven. God knows who are the loyal and true subjects of His kingdom on earth, and those who do His will upon earth as it is done in heaven, will be made the members of the royal family above."—Ellen G. White, "Sons and Daughters of God," page 361.

"The Lord is soon coming. Talk it, pray it, believe it. Make it a part of the life."—"Testimonies," Vol. 7, p. 237.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 6, pp. 261, 262.

## Duty to the Poor, the Erring, and the Wandering

“Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it.’

“Those who will be accounted worthy of an entrance into the city of God, will in character be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. So that He who is the Truth, in whose mouth there was no guile, will be able to say to them, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,’ and will be justified in saying, ‘Thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ Goodness and faithfulness must be found combined in the characters of those who are to inherit eternal life. The Lord cannot commend in this manner those who take pride in doing injustice, in dealing sharply with men who are related as brethren in the church, or with unbelievers. This kind of dealing is not after God’s business standard, but after the standard of the world, and must be repented of by those who would enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“There are men and women whose cold, unimpressible hearts have not kindled and glowed under the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Message after message has come to them, but they have not heeded the warning, and reformed their evil practices. The Lord Jesus, who is the judge of every man, will inquire in reference to many hard-hearted, selfish, scheming transactions,

‘Who hath required this at your hand?’ The spirit, the character, you have manifested has not been at all after the Pattern I have given you in my life and character, when I was upon the earth. Why have you not denied self, lifted the cross, and followed me? Your character is not after the divine similitude, but after the similitude of the character of the prince of evil; because mercy and the love of God have not been manifested. Heaven would be imperiled if any such unholy characters were to enter heaven; for you do not reflect the divine attributes of goodness, mercy, and love.

“By beholding you may become changed into the divine image. Jesus has given the parable of the lost sheep for our study. The true Shepherd leaves the ninety and nine, and goes into the desert at any expense and suffering to himself, in order that he may find the sheep that was lost. When he finds it, he brings it back with rejoicing. How many of the wandering and lost sheep have you sought for, and brought back to the fold with a heart full of pitying tenderness, forgiveness, and love? How many words of encouragement have you spoken to the wandering sheep, that have cost you pain, anxiety, and much inconvenience? Have you cherished a spirit to upbraid, to reproach, and to whip the poor wanderers back to the fold? or have you spoken soothing words of hope, courage, and pardon, bearing the wanderer home on your shoulders, rejoicing at every step, and saying, ‘Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep that was lost’?

“Jesus says to you, I have given to you the parable of the prodigal son, and how has it influenced your course of action? Have you felt tender sympathy for the erring one? As you have seen him awakening to a sense of the degradation that sin has brought upon him, have you spoken to him words of encouragement and hope? Have you had a sense of his suffering from re-

morse as he saw the years that he had lost? and have your tears fallen with his as he wept in penitence? Did you descry him afar off, and run forth to meet him with pity and gladness and love in your voice and heart, rejoicing that the poor, sin sick soul was repenting and returning to his father's house, even as I rejoiced to welcome you to my pardoning love? I went to meet you when you were lost; I welcomed you; I took you in my arms; I wept over you. Have you followed my example? Have you welcomed the prodigal to the fold? Have you accepted his repentance, and rejoiced over his return?

"How many manifest the spirit of the elder brother, who looked with coldness on the return of the prodigal, and instead of giving him a welcome, reproached those who rejoiced over his return as one who was undeserving and who had cost much trouble. Look at the two figures in the parable, and see whether you are manifesting a spirit similar to that of the self-righteous elder brother, who was full of envy, jealousy, evil surmising, and hatred toward the one whom the father received so graciously. In which class would the Lord Jesus reckon you were you on the ground where such a scene was enacted? These parables have a practical meaning that many do not discern.

"Study the life and character of Christ, and seek to imitate his example. The unconsécated course of some of those who claim to be believers in the third angel's message, has resulted in driving some of the poor sheep into the desert; and who is it that has manifested a shepherd's care for the lost and wandering? Is it not time to be Christians in practice as well as profession? What benevolence, what compassion, what tender sympathy, Jesus has manifested toward suffering humanity! The heart that beats in unison with his great heart of infinite love will give sympathy to every needy soul, and will make it manifest that he has the mind

of Christ. 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. Every suffering soul has a claim upon the sympathy of others, and those who are imbued with the love of Christ, filled with his pity, tenderness, and compassion, will respond to every appeal to their sympathy. They will not say, when an appeal is made to them in behalf of those who are perishing out of Christ, 'This does not concern me.' They will not act the part of the elder brother, but will manifest personal interest and sympathy. They will follow the example of their Master, and will go out to seek and to save that which was lost, obeying the Saviour's words when he said, 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Every soul who attempts to retrace his wanderings and return to God, needs the help of those who have a tender, pitying heart of Christ-like love.

"We are not to meet misery and repentance with censure, reproach, with suspicion, distrust, and jealousy, as the elder brother is represented as meeting the repenting prodigal; but we are to welcome the wanderer as he returns to his Father's house with the same compassion and sympathy as Jesus manifested toward us when we sought his pardoning love. He met lost humanity with infinite love. He encircled the perishing, wandering soul in the arms of his mercy, and connected sinful man with his own divine nature, and adopted the child of humanity into his own royal family. He presents this example to you, and says, Go thou and do likewise. When human agents become doers of the words and works of Christ, joy is created throughout the unfallen universe, and songs of rejoicing resound through all the heavenly worlds.

"The Lord has committed his goods to the charge of his human agents, and he expects that they will trade upon them. He has given to the trust of his people the fatherless and the widow, and yet souls have been left to perish for the

want of personal sympathy and labor. But your neglect of one soul is registered in heaven as neglect of Christ. Jesus has paid ransom for every soul, and he has identified his interest with that of the weakest and most erring. What befalls the children of men, touches Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. He reproved his own nation for the way in which they treated their fellow-men, and gave them to understand that an abuse inflicted upon the weakest and most sinful, was counted as a personal abuse to himself, the Lord of heaven. The favors shown to the poor and wretched and sinful, were also counted as personal favors to himself, to be remembered and rewarded hereafter. Christ has not left us in darkness as to what are our privilege and duty to our fellow-men, but through various parables and illustrations has presented our obligation to others. He has unfolded before us the scenes of the last great day, when all men are to be arraigned before his tribunal; and the treatment given to the least of his brethren is, according to its nature, commended or condemned by the sentence: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Or, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of them, ye did it not to me.'

"Christ is our substitute and surety; he stands before God in the place of humanity, and he is affected as his weakest follower is affected. The sympathy of Christ is such that he cannot be an indifferent spectator of his children's sufferings. The heart of him who gave his life for humanity is touched by the wound, however slight, that is given to one of his followers by the spirit revealed in the word or action of an-

other. Let us bear in mind that Christ is the great central heart from which the life-blood flows to every part of the great body of humanity. He is the head from which extend the nerves that reach even to the most minute and most remote parts of the body. When one member of the body with which Christ is so mystically connected, suffers, the throb of pain is felt by our Saviour.

"Will the church arouse? Will her members come into sympathy with Christ, so that they will have his tenderness for all the sheep and lambs of the fold? For their sake the Majesty of heaven made himself of no reputation; for them he came to a world all seared and marred with the curse. He toiled day and night to instruct, to elevate, to bring to everlasting joy a thankless and disobedient people. For their sake he became poor, that they through his poverty might become rich. For them he denied himself; for them he endured privation, scorn, contempt, suffering, and death; for them he took the form of a servant. Christ is our pattern, shall we copy him? Shall we not have a care for God's heritage? Shall we not cherish tender compassion for the erring, the tempted, and the tried? . . .

"How much of this work has been left undone. But will not the members of our churches take hold in earnest of these matters? God will work with those who will give him a chance. Look after the orphans and the widows and the poor, and see that no wandering one is left in the desert to perish for the want of personal labor and sympathy. Let the peace of God abide in your hearts by faith; and be ye thankful."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," Oct. 16, 1894.



## DELAY OF THE ADVENT 11

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" 2 Peter 3:11, 12.

In this text Peter has connected the hastening of the advent with holy and godly living. When we speak of delay in the coming of Christ we are really saying that we have not been, by the grace of God, the kind of people we should be. There has been delay. "It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed."—*Evangelism*, page 696. The subject of this delay should be investigated, not to heap condemnation on the church, but to learn from past experience how to avoid continued delay. Our emphasis should not be on the delay, but on hastening the advent. Only as knowledge of the circumstances of the delay helps us to hasten the advent is the delay important to us.

While the content of this lesson is on the delay, it is meant to lead to an emphasis on hurrying up the coming of our

Lord, as much as it is in our province to hurry it; delay is examined for the lessons that can be derived from it.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Parables and Delay  
Matt. 24:48-50
2. Destruction Delayed  
Rev. 7:1
3. Delay in Sealing  
Rev. 7:1-3
4. Delays in Love  
2 Peter 3:9
5. The Need for Patience  
Heb. 10:35-37
6. Need for Watchfulness  
Luke 12:35-37, 40

**Part 1**  
**PARABLES AND**  
**DELAY**  
**Matt. 24:48-50**

**"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of."**

A prominent feature of the parable of the two servants is the delay of the householder. There is nothing said of delay in connection with the faithful servant. He was faithfully doing his duty and constantly watching for the return of the master. He waited as long as the wicked servant. He was a servant, and the date of the master's return was not his business. The wicked servant reasoned that the master's staying away beyond the time of his expected return proved that he would stay away longer still. Delay in the past led him to assume that there would be delay in the future; and that was his undoing. Past delay speaks only of the past, not of the future.

► **What caused the crisis in the experience of the ten virgins? Matt. 25:5-8.**

"Lingering near the bride's house are ten young women robed in white. Each carries a lighted lamp and a small flagon for oil. All are anxiously watching for the appearance of the bridegroom. But there is a delay. Hour after hour passes; the watchers become weary and fall asleep. At midnight the cry is heard, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' The sleepers, suddenly awaking, spring to their feet. They see the procession moving on, bright with torches and glad with music. They hear the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. The ten maidens seize their lamps and begin to trim them, in haste to go forth. But five have neglected to fill their flasks with oil. They did not anticipate so long a delay, and they have not prepared for the emergency. In distress they appeal to their wiser companions saying, 'Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out.' (Margin.)"—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 405, 406.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the ideal reaction to delay of the advent?**

"The unfaithful steward had solemn responsibilities entrusted to him; before the world he appeared as a servant of Christ; but, oh, how deplorable for himself, and for all connected with him; he is an evil servant! He is imperiling his Lord's goods. He is teaching souls to trample upon the holy law of God. He calls Christ, 'My Lord.' But he says, 'My Lord delayeth His coming.' He does not

say that Christ will not come; he does not scoff at the idea of His second coming; but he tells the people that His coming is delayed. He is removing from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay."—"Testimonies to Ministers," pages 237, 238.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "The Great Controversy," pages 457-459.

December 11

**Part 2**  
**DESTRUCTION**  
**DELAYED**  
**Rev. 7:1**

**"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree."**

"Four angels. These angels represent divine agencies in the world holding back the forces of evil. . . .

"Four corners. Compare Isa. 11:12; Eze. 7:2. This signifies that the whole earth is threatened.

"Four winds. Frequently in Scripture the 'four winds' represent the four directions of the compass (see Dan. 8:8; Mark 13:27). Here the four winds are plainly destructive forces (see v. 3). Probably the closest parallel is to be found in Dan. 7:2, where they appear to be the forces of strife out of which great nations arise."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Rev. 7:1.

The prophetic setting of Rev. 7:1-3 is the period before the close of probation. The winds of destruction are ready to blow, but heavenly agencies hold them back. The signs of the advent are, in general, the worsening conditions of our world previous to the end. From one point of view the holding of the winds is a delay in the increasing intensity of the signs.

The delay pictured here is not because the forces of destruction have lost their potency, but because divine intervention holds them in check. The world is becoming neither a better nor a safer place, even though there may sometimes be hints of improvement. The source of such respite is the ministry of a loving heavenly Father, who is loath to leave the world entirely to its own devices.

► **What is the danger in postponing personal spiritual preparation because of continued delay in the destruction of the world? 1 Thess. 5:3.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How do you react to delays in ordinary affairs? Do you see any spiritual lessons in those reactions?**

"Time is very short, and all that is to be done must be done quickly. The angels are holding the four winds, and Satan is taking advantage of everyone who is not fully established in the truth. Every soul is to be tested. Every defect in the character, unless it is overcome by the help of God's Spirit, will become a sure means of destruction. I feel as

never before the necessity for our people to be energized by the spirit of the truth, for Satan's devices will ensnare every soul who has not made God his strength. The Lord has much work to be done; and if we do what He has appointed for us to do, He will work with our efforts."—"Testimonies," Vol. 5, p. 573.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 4, pp. 307-309.

**Part 3  
DELAY IN  
SEALING  
Rev. 7:1-3**

► **What reason is given for holding back the symbolic winds presented in Revelation 7?**

**“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”**

The relation in this prophecy between the holding of the winds and the sealing work implies that evil potentially comes to fruition before righteousness. God’s people are not ready to be sealed when the winds of destruction are ready to blow. “The soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 970. The seal is “the sign of the cross of Calvary in the Lord’s adopted sons and daughters.”—*Ibid.*, p. 968.

The central focus of delay is on the sealing work, and the sealing has to do with the spiritual condition of the people of God. It is not that we are today waiting for more last-day events so that the advent can take place. The wait is for the “servants of our God” to surrender themselves fully to the Spirit, to accept fully the self-sacrificing way of life shown by Jesus on Calvary and made possible for them by faith in Him so that the sealing can be accomplished. It is for a spiritual reason that the advent is delayed, and not for a political, social, or naturalistic reason. It is when the sealing is finished that the winds of strife are released and the last events take place.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How is the seal of God related to the Sabbath?**

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

“It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2

Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.”—“Christ’s Object Lessons,” page 69.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** “Christ’s Object Lessons,” pages 66-69.

**Part 4**  
**DELAYS IN LOVE**  
**2 Peter 3:9**

► **What promise is Peter referring to in the following verse?**

**"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."**

"God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; but His forbearance has a limit, and when the boundary is past, there is no second probation. His wrath will go forth and He will destroy without remedy.

"When men, being in power, oppress and spoil their fellow men, and no earthly tribunal can be found to do justice, God will interpose in behalf of those who cannot defend themselves. . . . When men put their trust in earthly powers instead of their Maker, when they become lifted up in pride and self-confidence, God will in His own time make them to be despised."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 946.

"Any apparent delay in the Lord's coming is due to God's unwillingness to close the door of salvation while there is hope of any sinner's repentance."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 2 Peter 3:9.

► **After pointing out God's forbearance, to what sure event does Peter direct his readers? 2 Peter 3:10.**

"The day of the Lord. The same as 'the day of God' (v. 12). . . .

"Will come. In the Greek the verb is placed in an emphatic position. The fact that the day of the Lord will come is beyond doubt."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 2 Peter 3:10.

Peter assures us that while God is long-suffering for the sinners' sake, yet the advent is certain. The apostle's thought of God's delay in the past combined with the certainty of His future coming is an expression of His character. In mercy He has delayed; but because He is just, Christ will surely come.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**The delay in the advent results in sin continuing longer, thus more sorrow and unhappiness than might have been if Christ had come sooner. How do you reconcile this with His love? Does God suffer more too?**

"The reason why the Bridegroom delays is because He is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. O the precious longsuffering of our merciful Saviour! O that each

of the dear youth would appreciate the value of the soul that has been purchased at infinite cost on Calvary!"—Ellen G. White, "Sons and Daughters of God," page 118.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 177-180.

**Part 5**  
**THE NEED FOR**  
**PATIENCE**  
**Heb. 10:35-37**

▶ **What circumstances stated in Hebrews 10 required the patience referred to in the following passage?**

**"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."**

"Those who are finally victorious will have seasons of terrible perplexity and trial in their religious life; but they must not cast away their confidence, for this is a part of their discipline in the school of Christ, and it is essential in order that all dross may be purged away. The servant of God must endure with fortitude the attacks of the enemy, his grievous taunts, and must overcome the obstacles which Satan will place in his way."—*Messages to Young People*, page 63.

We sympathize with those who win every race except the last one. The disappointment is extremely severe because of previous successes. How much more tragic it is when a Christian emerges victorious from all manner of trials, only to go down at last in defeat and despair. Paul does not wish to see this fate overtake his converts. He here warns them to hold fast their confidence to the end. It is the last battle which counts. If it is lost, all is lost.

▶ **What message to Habakkuk about the time of Judah's captivity is appropriate also in regard to the second advent? Hab. 2:3.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the root of the attitude of patience or impatience?**

"It will not be long till we shall see Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. And in His presence, all the trials and sufferings of this life will be as nothingness. 'Cast not away therefore your confidence. . . .' Look up, look up, and let your faith contin-

ually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city of God into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future of glory that is for the redeemed."—"Testimonies," Vol. 9, pp. 287, 288.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "The Great Controversy," pages 406-408.

December 15

**Part 6**  
**NEED FOR**  
**WATCHFULNESS**  
Luke 12:35-37, 40

**"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."**

The message of the signs is that the end has been near for more than one hundred years. We are living in an emergency period of delay while Christ waits in mercy for His people to prepare, by His grace, for His return. How soon these conditions will be met only God Himself knows. Our only safety is in watching and being ready to meet our Lord at any time.

"Our Lord had been warning His disciples against allowing their minds to be absorbed in the selfish acquisition of wealth, and against being anxious about needed food and clothing; they were to be supremely concerned about His Kingdom which would appear in glory at the time of His return. . . . If His coming was occupying their thoughts they would be kept at once from worldliness and from worry, and would be diligent in serving Him."—Erdman, *The Gospel of Luke*, page 127.

► **How will each type of servant be treated when the Master returns? Matt. 24:47, 50.**

"There can be no question about the 'eschatological motivation': Christians must be faithful to their duty because they 'know neither the day nor the hour' . . . when Christ will come. . . . This theme of the absentee landlord or master is recurrent in the gospel accounts of Jesus' teaching . . . and always is subject to this same eschatological interpretation. We must be faithful because the Day of Judgment is imminent."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 8, p. 232.

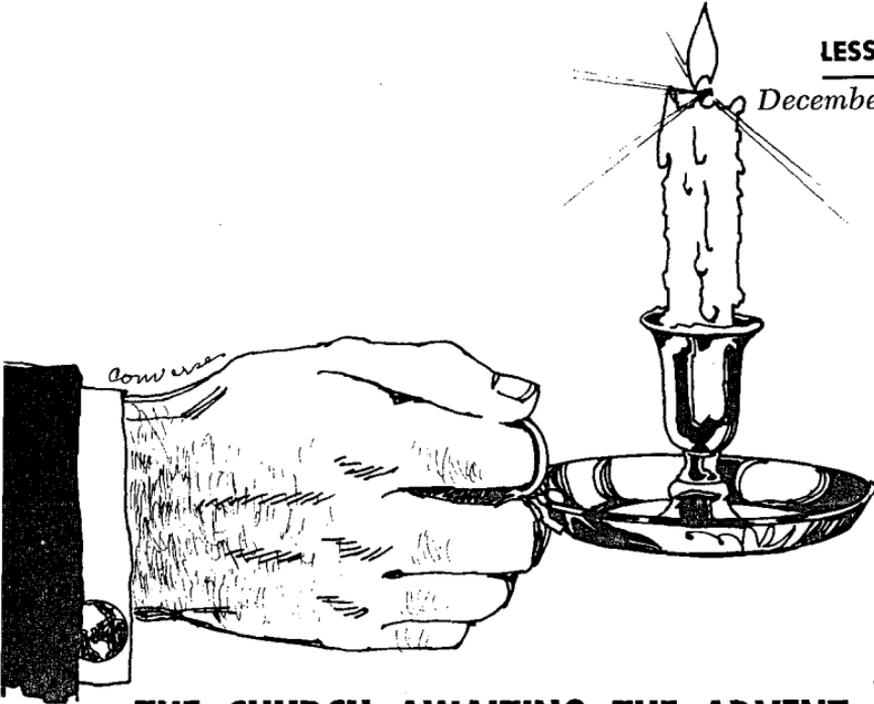
**THINK IT THROUGH**

**The faithful servant gave meat "in due season" while waiting for his employer. What does this mean?**

"The very best credentials we can carry is love for one another. All strife, all dissension, is to cease. God will not accept the talents of the smartest, the most eloquent man if the inner lamp

of the soul is not trimmed and burning."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, pp. 1099, 1100.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 490, 491.



## THE CHURCH AWAITING THE ADVENT **12**

**"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Heb. 10:23, 24.**

In some previous lessons, study has been given to outstanding signs of Christ's imminent return. Abundant evidence has been provided to show that the great Bible prophecies concerning the last days of this world's history are now meeting their fulfillment. But recognition of the promised signs is of little value unless such knowledge leads to appropriate action. Only as these divine warnings are heeded can they prove a blessing to the church. It is possible for Christians to become so familiar with the omens of the advent that their urgent challenge will be muted. Even ministers, regarding these omens as too well worn for sermon material, may cease to preach about them. Beyond question, the most vital need of the remnant church today is to be moved by the message it was called into existence to proclaim. By a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit it must sense anew the mighty meaning of the signs of the times

and be led thereby to full repentance of sin and total dedication to God.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Peril of the Church**  
Luke 21:34, 35
2. **Condition of the Church**  
Matt. 25:5
3. **Call for an Awakening**  
Isa. 51:9; 52:1
4. **Call to Work**  
Eph. 2:8-10
5. **God's Call to Holiness**  
1 John 3:2, 3
6. **Growing in Grace**  
2 Peter 3:18

December 17

**Part 1**  
**THE PERIL**  
**OF THE CHURCH**  
**Luke 21:34, 35**

► **What threatens to engross the attention of believers awaiting the advent?**

**"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."**

"I was shown our danger, as a people, of becoming assimilated to the world rather than to the image of Christ. We are now upon the very borders of the eternal world, but it is the purpose of the adversary of souls to lead us to . . . lead as many as possible to put off the evil day and become in spirit like the world, imitating its customs."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 306.

► **What prevented the people of Noah's time from knowing what could be known of the approach of the Flood? Matt. 24:38, 39.**

"In view of such glorious prophecies the heart of the Christian is ever to be set upon the gracious realities relating to the coming of the Master. The followers of Christ must be on their guard lest they be overcome by the influences which Jesus described as characterizing the days immediately preceding His return. There will be temptation to self-indulgence and indifference and absorption in worldly cares. Believers are warned to be on their watch lest the coming of Christ overtake them unexpectedly, as indeed it will come upon others."—Erdman, *The Gospel of Luke*, page 196.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What special temptations come to today's Christian that would ensnare him with "the cares of this life"?**

"The crisis is stealing gradually upon us. The sun shines in the heavens, passing over its usual round, and the heavens still declare the glory of God. Men are still eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying, and giving in marriage. Merchants are still buying and selling. Men are jostling one against another, contending for the highest place. Pleasure lovers are still crowding to theaters, horse races, gambling hells. The highest excitement prevails, yet probation's hour is fast clos-

ing, and every case is about to be eternally decided. Satan sees that his time is short. He has set all his agencies at work that men may be deceived, deluded, occupied and entranced, until the day of probation shall be ended, and the door of mercy be forever shut.

"Solemnly there come to us down through the centuries the warning words of our Lord from the Mount of Olives: 'Take heed to yourselves.'"—*"The Desire of Ages,"* page 636.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Patriarchs and Prophets," pages 101, 102.

**Part 2**  
**CONDITION OF**  
**THE CHURCH**  
**Matt. 25:5**

**"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."**

"Tarried. Gr. . . . 'to delay,' 'to linger.' The parable was a warning to those who 'thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear' (Luke 19:11 . . .). Jesus would not return as they had anticipated. But to have told the disciples of this in a clear and specific way would have discouraged them. . . .

"Christians today would do well to remember that the heavenly Bridegroom's delay is not due to any lack of preparedness on His part. He could have come long ago had His people been ready to welcome Him, and had they been faithful in completing their appointed task of preparing the world for His coming. . . .

"Slumbered and slept. That is, they became drowsy and went to sleep."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Matt. 25:5.

► **Why is it more important to keep awake now than ever before? Rom. 13:11, 12.**

"The coming of the Lord is nearer than when we first believed. The great controversy is nearing its end. Every report of calamity by sea or land is a testimony to the fact that the end of all things is at hand. Wars and rumors of wars declare it. Is there a Christian whose pulse does not beat with quickened action as he anticipates the great events opening before us?"—*Evangelism*, page 219.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the real meaning in the idea of being spiritually asleep or awake?**

"We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life. When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiv-

ing and the song of praise. Now the day of God is nearer than when we first believed, and we should be more earnest, more zealous, and fervent than in those early days. Our perils are greater now than then. Souls are more hardened. We need now to be imbued with the spirit of Christ, and we should not rest until we receive it."—*"Testimonies,"* Vol. 5, pp. 161, 162.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 6, pp. 20-22.

December 18

**Part 3  
CALL FOR AN  
AWAKENING  
Isa. 51:9; 52:1**

**"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?"**

**"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."**

The call to awake is twice repeated. In the first instance, the prophet appealed to God to awake and come to the aid of His chosen ones. Had He not done wonderful things for them? The Red Sea had been opened up, and food had been given from heaven for forty years. All through their history the Israelites had been preserved from a thousand dangers because of the active intervention of the God of heaven. As dangers threatened His people, an appeal was made for God to come to their rescue once again and save them from the plots of their enemies to overthrow them.

Then the Lord called for His people to awake. It was not God who was slumbering, but the people who needed to arouse. They had a work to do in preparation for God's action. Thus also, in awaiting the advent, believers must prepare by receiving the "beautiful garments" of Christ's righteousness.

► **How deep is the sleep of those in darkness? Eph. 5:14.**

"He [Satan] cannot hold in spiritual death one soul who in faith receives Christ's word of power. God is saying to all who are dead in sin, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.' Eph. 5:14. That word is eternal life. As the word of God which bade the first man live, still gives us life; as Christ's word, 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise,' gave life to the youth of Nain, so that word, 'Arise from the dead,' is life to the soul that receives it. It is all offered us in His word. If we receive the word, we have the deliverance."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 320.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the means by which a person is awakened to watch for the advent?**

"Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. 'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners' (Song of Solomon 6:10), she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer.

"The darkest hour of the church's struggle with the powers of evil is that

which immediately precedes the day of her final deliverance. But none who trust in God need fear; for 'when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm, against the wall,' God will be to His church 'a refuge from the storm.' Isaiah 25:4."—"Prophets and Kings," page 725.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Testimonies," Vol. 9, pp. 11-17.

December 20

**Part 4**  
**CALL TO WORK**  
**Eph. 2:8-10**

► **What purpose does Paul say is served by salvation through faith?**

**"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."**

"The salvation of the lost was the object of Christ's mission to earth, and he died to redeem sinners of every race and every clime. We are to be laborers together with him; for as long as there are sinners to be saved, so long are the followers of Christ to deny self, to work intelligently, to go forth into the high-ways and by-ways, showing forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Christ calls upon all who have discerned the merits of his sacrifice and character, to make known the wonders of redeeming love to those who know him not. He would have us bear with others as he has borne with us in our perversity, in our backslidings; for he hath not cast us off in our waywardness, but has forgiven our transgression, and clothed us with the robe of his righteousness, drawing us to himself by the cords of his love."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, May 24, 1892.

► **Read Matt. 28:19 and Rev. 14:6. What is the difference in the setting of these two texts? How do they resemble each other in meaning?**

"The people in the world need to know that the signs of the times are fulfilling. Take to them the books that will enlighten them. . . .

"Those who have been long in the truth are asleep. They need to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The third angel's message is to be proclaimed with a loud voice. . . . We have no time to lose."—*Colporteur Ministry*, page 120.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the special significance of witnessing for Christ in the time of the signs?**

"The truth is of no value to any soul unless it is brought into the inner sanctuary, and sanctifies the soul. Piety will degenerate, and religion become a shallow sentimentalism, unless the plowshare of truth is made to go deep into the fallow ground of the heart. When the truth is received, it will work radical changes in life and character;

for religion means the abiding of Christ in the heart, and where he is, the soul goes on in spiritual activity, ever growing in grace, every going on to perfection. All through our churches there are those who are spiritually paralyzed. They do not manifest spiritual life."—Ellen G. White, "Review and Herald," May 24, 1892.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Selected Messages," Bk. 2, pp. 154-157.

Part 5  
GOD'S CALL  
TO HOLINESS  
1 John 3:2, 3

► What is to be accomplished in one who hopes for the advent?

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

"We are not to settle down, expecting that a change of character will come to us by some miraculous work, when Jesus shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. No, my young friends, we are judgment-bound, and probation is granted to us here in this life, in order that we may form characters for the future, immortal life."—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, page 9.

► How much can human effort accomplish without divine aid? John 15:5.

The Christian must not take either of two dangerous theories. One says, "Jesus paid it all. There is nothing for me to do. He has fought the battle and won the victory; so all I need to do is say I believe in Him. Jesus wants me in the kingdom. If He wants me there, I will be there regardless of what I do." The other says, "It all depends on me. I must fight the good fight of faith. I must keep the commandments. Jesus wants me in the kingdom, but He expects me to work for it."

Both of these are extreme positions and must be rejected. It is only when divine power is united with human effort that the victory can be gained. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," wrote the apostle Paul.

THINK IT THROUGH

How is actual cooperation between man and Christ possible?

"Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, 'Without me ye can do nothing' (John 15:5). From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God. Unless the Holy Spirit works upon the human heart, at every step we shall stumble

and fall. Man's efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. Of ourselves we have no power to repent of sin. Unless we accept divine aid we cannot take the first step toward the Saviour. He says, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end' (Rev. 21:6) in the salvation of every soul."—"Selected Messages," Bk. 1, p. 381.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Steps to Christ," chapter, "The Test of Discipleship."

December 22

**Part 6**  
**GROWING IN**  
**GRACE**  
**2 Peter 3:18**

► **What is the relationship between growing in grace and growing in the knowledge of the Lord?**

**"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."**

"There is no Bible sanctification for those who cast a part of the truth behind them. . . .

"Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. . . .

"How is it possible that we may grow in grace? It is possible to us only as we empty our hearts of self, and present them to Heaven, to be molded after the divine Pattern. We may have a connection with the living channel of light; we may be refreshed with the heavenly dew, and have the showers of Heaven descend upon us. As we appropriate the blessing of God, we shall be able to receive greater measures of His grace. As we learn to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, we shall become changed into the image of Christ. The grace of Christ will not make us proud, cause us to be lifted up in self, but we shall become meek and lowly in heart."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 947.

► **What will be seen in the life of one who receives the Spirit? Gal. 5:22, 23.**

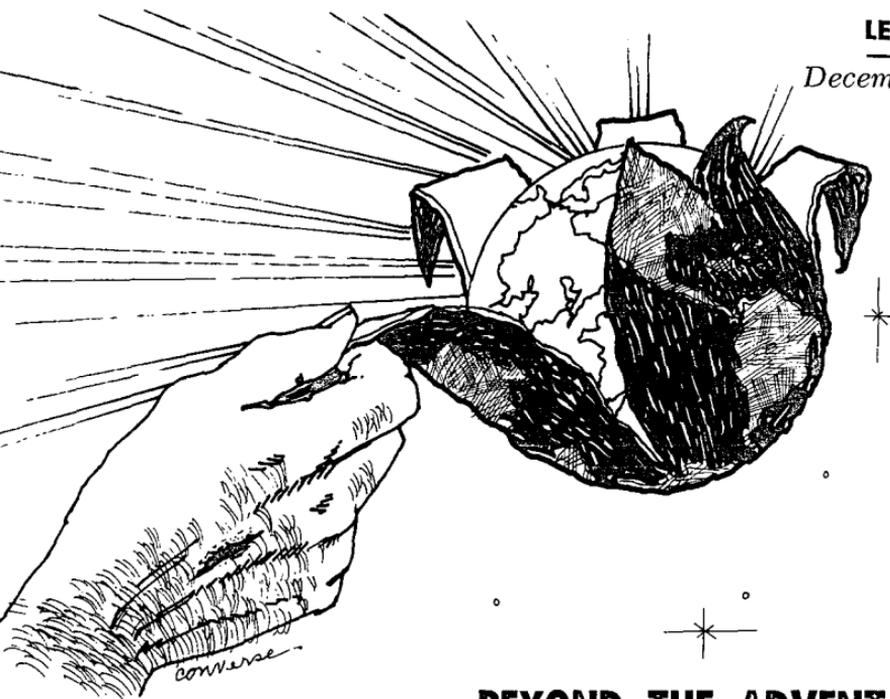
**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What actual life experience is referred to by the phrase "growing in grace"?**

"Growth is characteristic of the true child of God as it is of all living things, inasmuch as he has found a new life in Christ Jesus. . . . His goal is a character that resembles the perfect character of his lord, and a mind that is able to think His thoughts after Him. He aspires to 'grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.' . . . In this life, and thereafter in the

life to come, the Christian can look forward to endless growth in character and in understanding the will and ways of God. There will ever be new worlds of mind and spirit for him to conquer, new heights to climb, new doors of adventure and opportunity to open." —"*SDA Bible Commentary*," on 2 Peter 3:18.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Prophets and Kings," pages 722-725.



## BEYOND THE ADVENT 13

**"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.**

"Fellow pilgrim, we are still amid the shadows and turmoil of earthly activities; but soon our Saviour is to appear to bring deliverance and rest. Let us by faith behold the blessed hereafter as pictured by the hand of God. He who died for the sins of the world is opening wide the gates of Paradise to all who believe on Him. Soon the battle will have been fought, the victory won. Soon we shall see Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. . . .

"Look up, look up, and let your faith continually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future of glory that is for the redeemed. . . .

"The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout

for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, 'There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.'"  
—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 731-733.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. **God's Original Purpose**  
Isa. 45:18; 43:7
2. **A New World Promised**  
Dan. 7:18; Matt. 5:5
3. **Beyond Human Imagination**  
1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Cor. 4:17, 18
4. **A New Creation**  
Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1
5. **Situation of the Redeemed**  
Isa. 65:21-23
6. **Fulfillment of the Covenant**  
Rev. 21:3

**Part 1**  
**GOD'S ORIGINAL**  
**PURPOSE**  
Isa. 45:18; 43:7

► **Why did God create earth and its inhabitants?**

**"For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else."**

**"Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."**

"God created man for His own glory, that after test and trial the human family might become one with the heavenly family. It was God's purpose to re-populate heaven with the human family, if they would show themselves obedient to His every word. Adam was to be tested, to see whether he would be obedient. . . . If he stood the test, his instruction to his children would have been only of loyalty. His mind and thoughts would have been as the mind and thoughts of God. He would have been taught by God as His husbandry and building. His character would have been moulded in accordance with the character of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 1082.

"The earth originally given to man as his kingdom, betrayed by him into the hands of Satan, and so long held by the mighty foe, has been brought back by the great plan of redemption. All that was lost by sin has been restored. . . . God's original purpose in the creation of the earth is fulfilled as it is made the eternal abode of the redeemed. 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.'"—*The Great Controversy*, page 674.

► **What kind of person was man to be? Gen. 1:26.**

God is love, and love is the basis of creation. *Education*, page 16. Love without persons to love is meaningless. So God created man in His image that there might be a mutual experience of love. A careful analysis of Genesis 1 as to God's acts can lead to a fuller understanding of the expression "the image of God."

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What does it mean to live to the glory of God?**

**"To be inhabited.** . . . The earth was not created 'in vain.' . . . It was designed to be the home of man. Regardless of what may be the purpose of the enemy and what ruin he may accomplish by sin, God's original plan will at length be carried out. Creation was a

purposeful act, not merely an end in itself. Sin has postponed the realization of that purpose, but though postponed for a time it will ultimately be achieved. God's infinite purposes know no haste and no delay."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, " on Isa. 45:18.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:** "The Adventist Home," page 540; "The Great Controversy," pages 436, 437, 674.

**Part 2  
A NEW WORLD  
PROMISED**

**Dan. 7:18; Matt. 5:5**

► **What two designations are used to indicate those who will possess God's kingdom?**

**"But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."**

**"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."**

"The great plan of redemption results in fully bringing back the world into God's favor. All that was lost by sin is restored. Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode of the obedient. For six thousand years Satan has struggled to maintain possession of the earth. Now God's original purpose in its creation is accomplished. 'The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom.'—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 342.

Today the meek do not have much of the earth. They are thrust aside by the strong, the vicious, the ruthless elements abroad in our world. But that arrangement will come to an end. It has been sneeringly said, "It is a good thing that the meek are going to inherit it. They would never get it in any other way." Yes, thank God, it is to be by inheritance. Christ the mighty Conqueror is going to take it from the hands of the strong and give it to the meek.

► **What assurance is given the children of God? Luke 12:32.**

Children sometimes get the idea that God is standing at the heavenly gate watching to see that only the perfect enter, looking for every possible excuse for rejecting them. What a travesty on the character of God! Jesus assured His followers that it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. There was no possibility of their earning it, but it would be a free gift. Very literally they would someday inherit the new earth.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What does it mean to be meek?**

"The meek 'shall inherit the earth.' It was through the desire for self-exaltation that sin entered into the world, and our first parents lost the dominion over this fair earth, their kingdom. It is through self-abnegation that Christ redeems what was lost. And He says we

are to overcome as He did. Revelation 3:21. Through humility and self-surrender we may become heirs with Him when 'the meek shall inherit the earth.' Psalm 37:11."—"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," page 17.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 13-18.

Part 3  
BEYOND HUMAN  
IMAGINATION

1 Cor. 2:9;  
2 Cor. 4:17, 18

► Why do we have difficulty in understanding God's future heavenly plans for us?

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"Paul had a view of heaven, and in discoursing on the glories there, the very best thing he could do was to not try to describe them. He tells us that eye had not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him. So you may put your imagination to the stretch, you may try to the very best of your abilities to take in and consider the eternal weight of glory, and yet your finite senses, faint and weary with the effort, cannot grasp it, for there is an infinity beyond. It takes all of eternity to unfold the glories and bring out the precious treasures of the Word of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1107.

"God intends that, even in this life, truth 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. 'The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;' 'for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.' And the Saviour's promise to His followers was: 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.'"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 703.

THINK IT THROUGH

Isn't it selfish to seek rewards? How do you reconcile the idea of rewards for the faithful with the unselfish nature of the Christian life?

"Oh, how much we lose by not educating the imagination to dwell upon divine things, rather than upon the earthly! We may give fullest scope to the imagination, and yet, 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Fresh wonders will be revealed to the mind the more closely we

apply it to divine things. We lose much by not talking more of Jesus and of heaven, the saints' inheritance. The more we contemplate heavenly things, the more new delights we shall see, and the more will our hearts be brimful of thanks to our beneficent Creator."—Ellen G. White Comments, "*SDA Bible Commentary*," Vol. 6, p. 1085.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "The Great Controversy," pages 674, 675.

**Part 4**  
**A NEW CREATION**

Isa. 65:17;

Rev. 21:1

► **What will be the extent of God's new creation?**

**"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."**

**"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."**

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.' Revelation 21:1. The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away. No eternally burning hell will keep before the ransomed the fearful consequences of sin.

"One reminder alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought."—*The Great Controversy*, page 674.

► **What are some of the features which will distinguish the future new earth from the present evil one? Rev. 21:3, 4.**

"Even today we can rejoice in the thought of the joys and glories of the world to come. The pictures of a new and better world give strength and courage as we meet the trials of the present. Disappointments and discouragements will be met with better grace if our hearts are set on the abounding joys of the new earth, which is soon to become our home."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Isa. 65:18.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why must there be a new world? Would not a new civilization be adequate?**

"Here they stand, and the finishing touch of immortality is put upon them, and they go up to meet their Lord in the air. The gates of the city of God swing back upon their hinges, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There are the columns of angels on either side, and the ransomed of God walk in through the cherubims and seraphims. Christ bids them welcome and puts upon them His benediction. . . .

"Oh, what music! There is not an inharmonious note. Every voice proclaims, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.' He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. Do you think anyone there will take time to tell of his trials and terrible difficulties? 'The former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.'"—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 6, p. 1093.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Early Writings," pages 16-20.

**Part 5**  
**SITUATION OF**  
**THE REDEEMED**  
Isa. 65:21-23

► **What promises to Judah will be fulfilled in the new earth?**

**"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them."**

"Through premature death, invasion, and deportation the Israelites had lost their homes, their fields, and vineyards. Settlement in the restored state was no more to be interrupted by these. In the new heavens and new earth now soon to be established, occupancy will not be interrupted even by death. Life in the new earth will to a large degree be similar to the life that man lived in Paradise before the entrance of sin."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Isa. 65:21.

"A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. . . . Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God."—*The Great Controversy*, pages 674, 675.

"There the student of science may read the records of creation and discern no reminders of the law of evil. He may listen to the music of nature's voices and detect no note of wailing or undertone of sorrow. In all created things he may trace one handwriting—in the vast universe behold 'God's name writ large,' and not in earth or sea or sky one sign of ill remaining.

"There the Eden life will be lived, the life in garden and field."—*Education*, page 303.

► **What features were promised to Israel in the restored earth? Isa. 65:25; 35:5, 6.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the basic difference between the activities of the Christian in the present world and his activities in the new earth?**

"All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar—worlds that thrilled with sorrow at

the spectacle of human woe and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul."—"The Great Controversy," page 677.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: "Prophets and Kings," pages 729-733.

**Part 6**  
**FULFILLMENT**  
**OF THE COVENANT**  
Rev. 21:3

► In the New Jerusalem what is to be the relationship of God and the redeemed?

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, 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."

► How close is this new relationship between God and man? Rev. 22:4.

► In what context was the idea of this God-people relation presented in the Old Testament? Deut. 29:12, 13. (See also Gen. 17:7 and Lev. 26:12.)

There will not be merely a theoretical or abstract relation between God and His people, but God will be visible to them, and they will have consented to the principles of His character.

"All who enter will have on the robe Christ's righteousness, and the name of God will be seen in their foreheads. This name is the symbol which the apostle saw in vision, and signifies the yielding of the mind to intelligent and loyal obedience to all of God's commandments."—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, page 370.

The whole purpose of the covenant that God initiated through Abraham was that he and his descendants should be God's people, and God should be their God. This is the covenant in its simplest terms. Thus when in Rev. 21:3 we find this same idea we conclude that the New Jerusalem, peopled by the saints, is the fulfillment of the covenant. This covenant includes all the work of Jesus Christ, and Rev. 21:3 thus proclaims the final success of the plan of redemption. God and His people are at last united and belong to each other in the way He intended at creation.

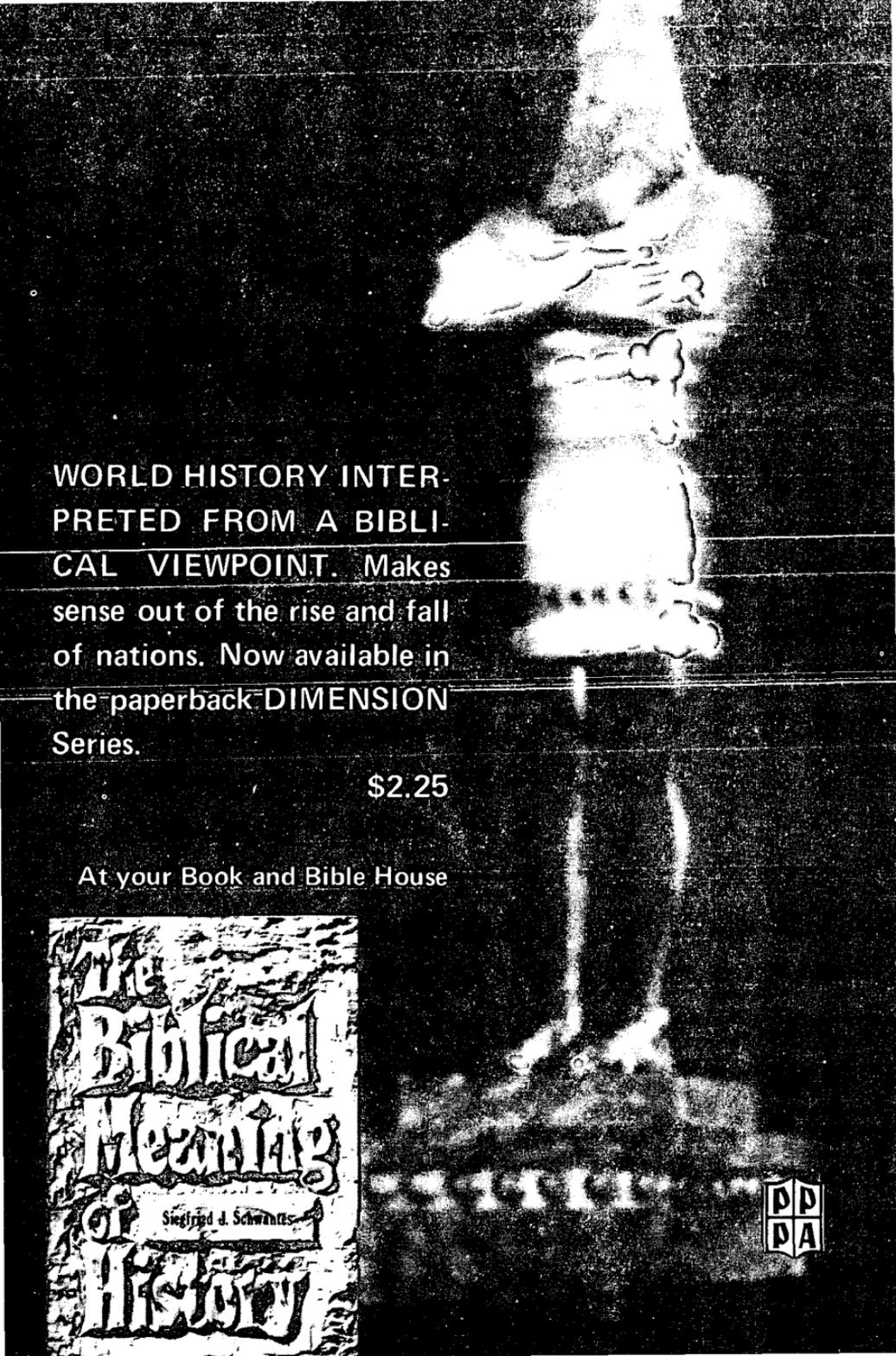
**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What determines if I am one of God's people?**

"The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. 'Now we see through a glass, darkly.' 1 Corinthians 13:12. We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and

in His dealings with men; but then we shall see Him face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in His presence and behold the glory of His countenance."—"The Great Controversy," pages 676, 677.

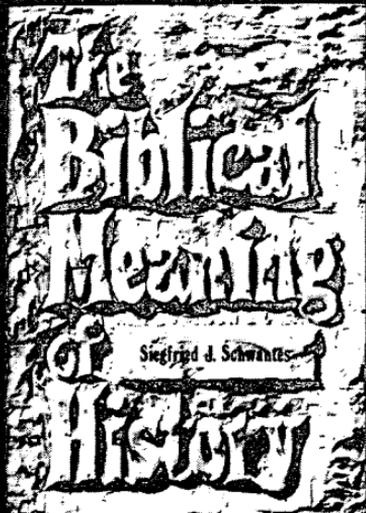
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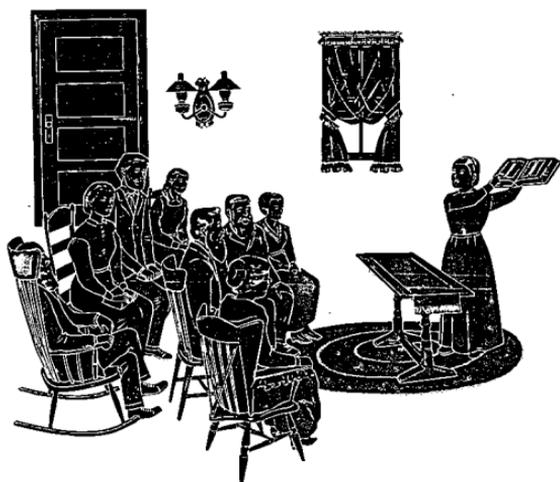
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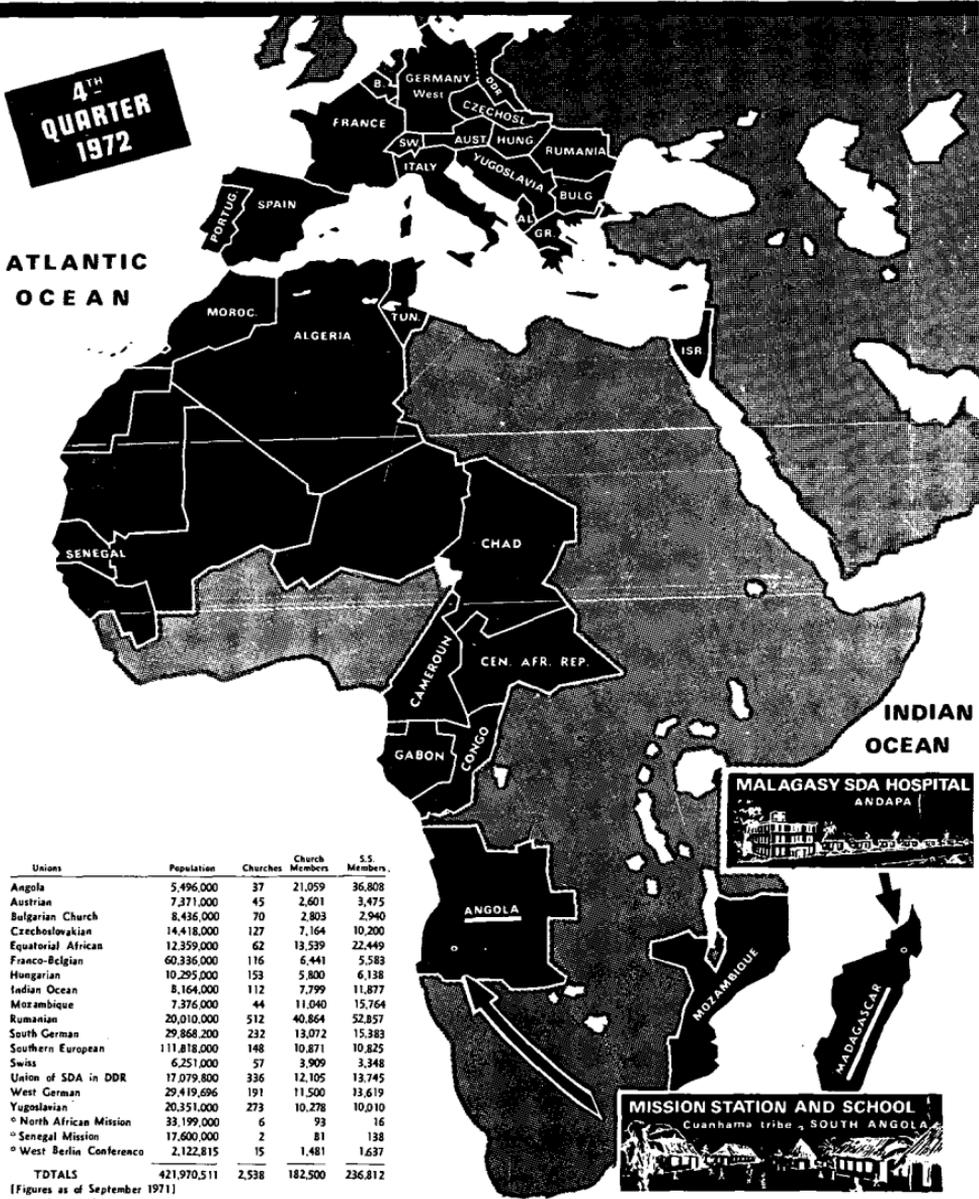
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# EURO-AFRICA DIVISION

**4<sup>TH</sup>  
QUARTER  
1972**

**ATLANTIC  
OCEAN**

**INDIAN  
OCEAN**



Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members	S.S. Members
Angola	5,496,000	37	21,059	36,808
Austrian	7,371,000	45	2,601	3,475
Bulgarian Church	8,436,000	70	2,803	2,940
Czechoslovakian	14,418,000	127	7,164	10,200
Equatorial African	12,359,000	62	13,539	22,449
Franco-Belgian	60,336,000	116	6,441	5,583
Hungarian	10,295,000	153	5,800	6,138
Indian Ocean	8,164,000	112	7,799	11,877
Mozambique	7,376,000	44	11,040	15,764
Rumanian	20,010,000	512	40,864	52,857
South German	29,868,200	232	13,072	15,383
Southern European	111,818,000	148	10,871	10,825
Swiss	6,251,000	57	3,909	3,348
Union of SDA in DDR	17,079,800	336	12,105	13,745
West German	29,419,696	191	11,500	13,619
Yugoslavian	20,351,000	273	10,278	10,010
° North African Mission	33,199,000	6	93	16
° Senegal Mission	17,600,000	2	81	138
° West Berlin Conference	2,122,815	15	1,481	1,637
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>421,970,511</b>	<b>2,538</b>	<b>182,500</b>	<b>236,812</b>

[Figures as of September 1971]  
° Detached Fields