

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

A General Conference Church Ministries Publication October-December 1989

Zechariah: Prophet of Unrealized Hope



Worthy goal.



“Success to me means making life a little better for people.”

*Lisa Bjelland, 23, WWC social work graduate 1987,
child and family service specialist, candidate for
WWC master of social work degree*

Spirit of Excellence

WALLA WALLA COLLEGE

1-800-541-8900 U.S. 1-800-572-8964 Wash.

Admissions Office, Walla Walla College

204 South College Avenue, College Place, WA 99324-1198

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Editorial Office:
Department of
Church Ministries
General Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists
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Staff

Editorial Director: George E. Knowles
Editor: Graham Bingham
Managing Editor: Laurell Peterson
Editorial Secretary: Lynn Bratcher
Pacific Press Editor: Lincoln Steed
Marketing: Bob Gorton
Sales Office: Shirley Sayers
Publisher: Pacific Press,
Nampa, Idaho

Editorial Team

Graham Bingham, Chairman
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Reading Committee

Graham Bingham Frank Holbrook
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Marsha Frost Ted Wick
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Send circulation inquiries to Pacific Press Publishing Association, P. O. Box 7000, Boise, Idaho 83707, U.S.A.

CONTRIBUTOR PROFILE

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY, BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

Lessons 1 - 4

Campus Editor: Bruce Closser

Contributors:

Greg Arihood	Eric High	Edward Pelto
Charles Armistead	Jolie High	Joy K. Pelto
Sheela Bahtula	Nicole Khalil	Jonathan Peters
Melissa Barnhart	Christina Marsa	L. Monique Pittman
Tonya Di Biase	Peter Miller	D. G. Rand
Kimberly Brundage	Randall Minnick	David L. Rasmussen
Bruce Closser	Hiram Moretta	David Son
Janelle Denny	P. B. Morrison	Kimberly Wasiczko
Michael G. Hasel	Monica S. Oh	Angela Wiant
		Karohn Young

ATLANTIC UNION COLLEGE, SOUTH LANCASTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Lessons 5, 6

Campus editor: Richard L. Trott

Contributors:

Joy Damon	Sharon Klatt	Howard Savage
Steven Durest	Margarita Merriman	David S. Stone
Lawrence T. Geraty	Ruth Nunez	Richard L. Trott

LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY, LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

Lesson 7, 8

Campus editor: W. Clarence Schilt

Contributors:

Mike Boyko	Sheila C. Elwin	W. Clarence Schilt
Pam Dietrich	Kevin D. Paulson	Bruce Wilcox

LOMA LINDA CAMPUS HILL CHURCH, LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

Lesson 9, 10

Editor: Larry Christoffel

Contributors:

Larry Christoffel	Tom Glatts	Linda Page
Cami Dale	Snorri Olafsson	Bjorgvin Snorrason
		Sigve Tonstad

CANADIAN UNION COLLEGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

Lesson 11

Campus Editor: Brian Leavitt

Contributors:

Keith Clouten

Lissa Hawes

Bernice Leavitt

Caroline Evahnenko

Lynden Hawes

Stephen Little

Caesar Nawalkowski

PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE, ANGWIN, CALIFORNIA

Lessons 12, 13

Campus Editor: Greg A. King

Contributors:

H. Roger Bothwell

Annemarie Hamlin

Iris Paradez

Ian A. Bothwell

Greg A. King

Thomas Seibold

Morris Brown, Jr.

Nicholas Patrick Miller

Dennis Yoshioka

Dick Duerksen

Julie Murdoch

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS:

Frank Holbrook, an associate director in the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference.

Evert McDowell, newswriter in the public-relations department of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International.

THIS QUARTER'S ARTIST

Jim McClelland's study of wildlife, together with his interest in the visual arts, goes back beyond his memory. It seems that both his love for the things of the natural world and his love for art have always been there. Growing up in rural Michigan provided the stimulus for his informal study while more formal art training later took place at Andrews University and at Michigan State University. Additionally, degrees were earned in English and in Counseling from Andrews University and from Western Michigan University.

Jim, his wife, Huda, and their two children, now live in Lincoln Nebraska, where he is professor of Art at Union College. His work is represented in many private and corporate collections across the country. Jim's paintings have appeared in numerous one- and two-man shows and have captured many first place awards.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

Facts You Should Know

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is based on the conviction that there is transforming power in the Word of God and that one important way of tapping into that power is through group study. It is prepared with Adventist college students and young adults particularly in mind. Its purpose is to provide this group with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed together each week in Sabbath School.

Additionally, many who use the adult quarterly find that the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, since it deals with the same topics as the adult, enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist colleges and universities, along with young-adult church groups, work together in producing the quarterly. The writing at each school is coordinated by the campus chaplain's office. Approximately 200 individuals contribute to the quarterly each year.

Circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is about 25,000.

Pointers for Study

1. The Bible passage to be studied for each week is indicated in bold on the introduction page (Sunday's lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

2. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the Logos pages (Monday's lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in the bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

3. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained by your own study of the Biblical passage.

4. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

Introduction (Sunday) is designed to get your attention and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

Logos (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

Testimony (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

Evidence (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most "scholarly" article of the week.

How To (Thursday) discusses what the "theory" in the lesson means for day-to-day living.

Opinion (Friday) is a personal viewpoint on the lesson, meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

5. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

The CQ and the Church

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.* Particularly in the Evidence and Opinion sections, views are expressed which are only individual opinion, not official denominational positions.

Introduction to Zechariah

With Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C., all the former Babylonian territories, including Syria and Palestine, came under Persian control. From his capital in Ecbatana, Cyrus ruled (539-530 B.C.) virtually all the Near East except Egypt.

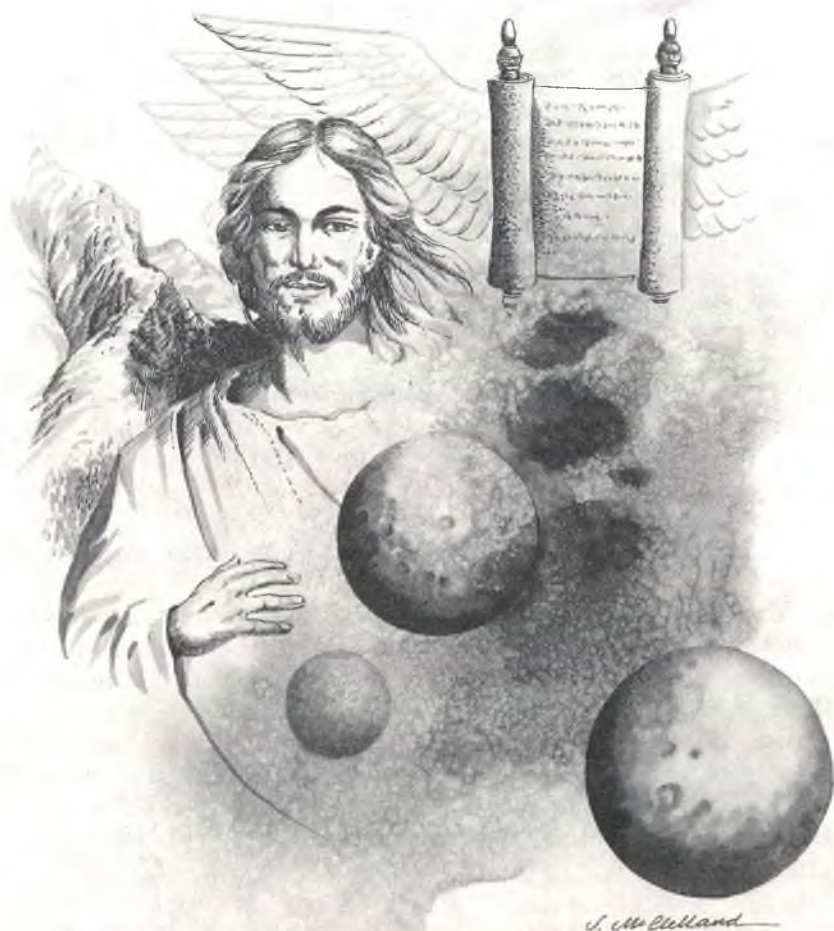
By modern standards Cyrus' rule appears as an unusually enlightened one. Not only did he reject the Assyrian and Babylonian policies of brutal subjugation and displacement of conquered populations, but he actually encouraged cultural autonomy among the separate peoples of his realm.

In this light, the decree issued by Cyrus in 538 B.C. permitting the Jewish exiles to return home comes as no surprise (Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5).

Haggai and Zechariah were among the Jews who returned to Judah, during the second migration (520 B.C.), under the leadership of Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

Zechariah, whose prophecies date from 520 to 518 B.C., was thus a contemporary of the prophet Haggai and shared his zeal for the rebuilding of the Temple, a purified community, and the coming of the Messianic age. Judging by the books named after them, we can see they were different types of prophet: Haggai was practical; Zechariah visionary. The brevity and clarity of Haggai's book is a stark contrast to the length and difficulty of Zechariah's. Jerome, one of the great scholars of the early Christian church, describes Zechariah as "the most obscure of books." Its visions and oracles, its apocalyptic sayings, its Messianic prophecies, are all of such a nature that render interpretation difficult. Yet the difficulties should not intimidate us as we study this quarter's lessons. Zechariah is one of the most frequently quoted books in the New Testament. The New Testament writers, in other words, were able to relate much of Zechariah's thought to their own time, and an understanding of this later perspective will help us grasp the prophet's message.

Lesson 1, October 1-7
Looking Up



“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1, 2, NIV).

Sunday, October 1

A Little Girl's Question

INTRODUCTION

Scriptures: Zechariah 1:1, 7, 18;
2:1; 5:1, 5, 9; 6:1.

The sun was shining, the birds were chirping, and all around me there were people frolicking in the green meadows of the park. However, despite the happy setting, I was oblivious to everything except my numerous obligations.

My mind raced through my hectic schedule. Why, oh, why, did I ever agree to teach Bible studies, organize the church get-together, and agree to sing the special music for an upcoming baptism? I mentally kicked myself because, in addition to all those church activities, I had to study for my final exams at school.

As I sat there lamenting my fate and stupidity, I noticed a young couple with a small daughter walking toward me. The beginning of a small family, I thought to myself. As they drew closer to me, their conversation became more audible.

The little girl asked, "Mommy, how do butterflies fly? Daddy, why are trees so tall and green?" and as the family passed by me, the daughter asked, "Who makes rainbows?"

Long after they had left, I sat on the grass and mulled over the little girl's last question. Who makes rainbows? It reminded me of a song that I had once known, sung, and loved—"Who Made the Rainbow?"

It had been eleven years since I had last sung that song with my sister at a church service. I began to hum the tune, and slowly the words came back to me: "Who made the beautiful rainbow—I know, I know; God made the beautiful rainbow, that's why I love Him so."

It took a little girl's question to help me "lift up my eyes and see God." I know that He loves us, because His gifts are found everywhere—in nature, in friends, in family, in the church—all we have to do is lift up our eyes and see: "God made the beautiful rainbow."

by Monica S. Oh

Monica Oh is a marketing and communication major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Visions Above My Head

LOGOS

Theme: *The Hebrew name Zechariah means "God remembers." Often in the hustle and bustle of life we forget that God remembers us; we need to stop, turn, lift up our eyes, and see Him.*

1. Zechariah—God Remembers (read Zechariah 1:1, 7)

"In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, the prophet" (Zech. 1:1, RSV).

When we happen to come across a book of names and their meanings, sitting on a magazine rack, our first impulse is to look up our own name and see what it means. Our curiosity satisfied, we tuck away our bit of trivia for some future time when it seems convenient to recall. But, as time goes by, we promptly forget the meaning of our name because it is something we do not use regularly in our daily conversations.

This was not the case for Hebrew names, which captured something of the personality of their bearers, or reminded others of some important character trait that should not be forgotten. Take, for instance, the name *Zechariah*, a common Hebrew name which means "God remembers." Zechariah, like Ezekiel, appears to have been both prophet and priest (cf Neh. 12:16). He was probably born in Babylon but began his ministry after the exile.

He was appointed by God to arouse the Hebrews to renewed activity in the work of rebuilding the Temple that had begun earlier but had been interrupted because of political pressures.

God intended Zechariah's messages to help the Jews remember their mission by showing them their glorious future and the conditions for reaching that future. And Zechariah's name became a constant reminder that God had not forgotten His people, just as they should not forget their purpose in rebuilding the Temple.

How should bearing the name Christian lead us to lift up our eyes to God?

2. Zechariah Lifted Up His Eyes and Saw (read Zechariah 1:18; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1)

*"And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns."
". . . a man with a measuring line in his hand!" ". . . a flying scroll!"
". . . four chariots came out from between two mountains" (Zech. 1:18; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1, RSV).*

The first few chapters of Zechariah clearly define his mission of encouragement. Then in a series of eight visions he relates the story of God's purpose for His people upon their return to Judea. The story traces God's desire to restore the Temple in Jerusalem. Subsequent visions remind the people of suffering they experienced because of their captivity; of God's intent to restore that damage; and of the means

by Bruce Closser

Bruce Closser teaches composition in the English department at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

through which the healing process could occur. The story culminates with the Messiah coming to live among His people.

Each vision commences with the litanous phrase, "And I lifted my eyes and saw." Eye-witness accounts of any event always carry more weight than hearsay; an eye witness to a crime may be the one factor that sways a jury's decision. In this case we sense that Zechariah emphasizes the eye-witness quality of his visions. That he personally "saw" these things, of which he rendered an account, served to underscore their significance.

In what way can we be said to give eye-witness accounts of the glory we hope to achieve one day?

3. Understand, Apply, and Live (read Zechariah 4:4-6; 6:4, 5)

"And I said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these, my lord?' Then the angel who talked with me answered me" (Zech. 4:4, 5, RSV).

After each vision Zechariah turns to his accompanying angel and asks, "What are these things?" Zechariah's question re-

minds us that God wants us to understand, so He expects us to ask questions. Questions are normal reactions to puzzling information. They are indications that we are struggling to understand. In Zechariah's case, the survival of the colony of returned exiles, struggling to reestablish themselves, depended on their understanding the significance of God's messages to them.

We face a puzzling world today, one often no less—and sometimes more—threatening than the one Zechariah and his people faced. Our response to conditions around us depends in large measure on our understanding of the prophecies we have been given regarding the end of time. As He did for Zechariah, God wishes us to understand the prophecies so we can implement their significance for our lives in a practical way today. Zechariah's active questioning of the angel models a process whereby we can accomplish this goal.

How can we stop, turn, lift up our eyes, and see God through active, honest questioning of the meaning of His prophecies?

Taking the Time

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Psalm 46:10

As we rush around from day to day, doing the things that are so important to us, we often forget about God, and at times we might not even acknowledge His existence. Enoch was a person who realized the importance of daily communication with God. In *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White instructs us to follow His example: "Pray in your closet, and as you go about your daily labor let your heart be often uplifted to God. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. These silent prayers rise like precious incense before the throne of grace. Satan cannot overcome him whose heart is thus stayed upon God."¹

Not only is communication with God important in establishing our relationship with Him but it also strengthens us against Satan and his temptations. The martyr Stephen is a striking example of the power that comes from looking upward toward God. "For him the fear of death was gone. For him the enraged priests and the excited mob had no terror. The scene before him faded from his vision. To him the gates of heaven were ajar, and, looking in, he saw the glory of the courts of God, and Christ, . . . standing ready to sustain His servant. In words of triumph Stephen exclaimed, 'Behold,

I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.'"²

When we keep close to God other people will notice a difference in us. "The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. . . . His words, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed."³

God is always there for us, ready and waiting, if we take the time to acknowledge Him. "All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. . . . When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' . . . Amidst the hurrying throng, and the strain of life's intense activities, he who is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. He will receive a new endowment of both physical and mental strength. His life will breathe out a fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men's hearts."⁴

REACT

What are some ways you can make or take time for God in your life?

1. *Steps to Christ*, pp. 98, 99.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 100, 101.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

4. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 58.

by Tonya Di Biase

Tonya Di Biase is studying French and health science at Andrews University. She enjoys sports, people, and traveling.

Wednesday, October 4

Zechariah, Locke, and Remembering the Past

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Psalm 121:1, 2, NIV

In thinking of this week's theme, "God remembers," and of our need to remember Him, I see a relationship between Zechariah's experience and the concepts John Locke proposed. One of the originators of the empiricist movement, John Locke visualized a human born as a "tabula rasa" or a blank slate upon which experience would engrave truths. This concept of humanity led Locke to the conclusion that the essential self consisted of that portion of the past that a person could remember. The past housed truth and knowledge imprinted upon humans through experience.

The portion of Locke's thesis that strikes me as corresponding to Zechariah's experience is Locke's concept of the self. As a student, I find that my life is colored by the stresses of studying for classes, participating in extracurricular activities, and nurturing friendships despite an overloaded schedule. Each of us, regardless of position or occupa-

tion, is faced with a diverse circle of obligations that tug at us from all directions. Meeting these demands often draws us farther and farther away from what we perceive to be our personal identity. When, for a moment, life slows down, then we each face the question "Who am I?"

If we choose to accept Locke's thesis we are the sum of our past experiences. For most of humanity this would appear to be a somewhat dismal interpretation of the self. But, for the Christian, I believe Locke's view actually offers hope. If we stop and take a moment to ponder our past we can clearly see God's guiding presence both in the sorrowful and the joyous experiences. Extending Locke's thesis, we can then identify the essence of ourselves as our relationship with the Lord.

Remembering that God remembers us not only brings us strength to endure the present but gives us hope for the future, because our lives are being intricately woven into God's plan. Zechariah knew, as we know, that, given the Lord's grace, we can never lose sight of who we are.

by L. Monique Pittman

Monique Pittman is a freshman English major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Thursday, October 5

Living by the Lord

HOW TO

Key Text: Psalm 34:4

How often have you felt tired, worry-laden, and depressed? How often did you want to have someone to look to in your time of trouble? King David said, "I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1, 2, NIV). King David received his help by "looking up"; and in the verses we have been studying this week, Zechariah "looked up" and found the help and guidance he needed.

Often, in our everyday hustle and bustle, we forget to look up and thus allow all sorts of things to get us down. So how do we "look up" to God in a practical way?

1. *Look for God in your everyday routine.* Whenever you take a break from work or studies just sit back and tell God whatever is on your mind. Even if you have no worries, tell God about the good things that have happened during the day. Talk to Him as you would to a friend avoiding the stuffy style of praying so often

used in formal prayers.

2. *Share your concerns with God before you go to sleep.*

Taking your worries to bed not only keeps you from having a peaceful state of mind but it also deprives you of a good night's sleep. Before you go to bed tell God about the things that concern and worry you. After telling God about them, forget them! Remember the promise, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).

3. *Read God's Word.* By studying the Bible, our minds will always be looking up to God. Try to memorize key texts that apply to everyday situations. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). Look up and live!

REACT

When we talk to God or read His Word, how can we be sure that we "see" Him and He sees and hears us? Should we experience a special feeling or is it all by faith? Explain.

by David Son

David Son is a chemistry major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Friday, October 6

God Remembers the Undeserving

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 28:20

When I was just a little girl, God and I were close friends. But by the time I reached high school God had forgotten me, or so I thought. My grandmother, who faithfully took me to church as a child; my senior Bible teacher; and the academy chaplain couldn't convince me that God still cared. Too much had happened in my life, I thought, that showed the contrary. I had faced so many problems and experienced so much pain that I allowed myself to believe God had forgotten me. I mean, why would a Superior Being care for someone so insignificant and prone to trouble as myself? This thought plagued me until my third quarter at Andrews University.

During the second quarter I discovered I could not stay at Andrews, because I lacked \$3,000 in tuition money. I talked with people who prayed for me, and with me, but deep down inside I was convinced that God did not care. I was so down on myself that I couldn't see how God would want to remember someone who had never believed in Him without reservation. But, acting on instinct, or intuition, or whatever you want to call it, when I registered for the third

quarter I told the financial-aid office that I would be receiving a grant of \$2,100. I had previously been notified that I was not getting the grant, so I phoned the company, and they said they would think about it again. So, acting on what little faith I could muster, I said, "Lord, remember me? If you really care about me you'll get me that grant." I know I was being unfair with the Lord, but He came through and so did the money.

Sometimes it's difficult to realize that God remembers us little sinful folk down here on this dark dreary planet. But He does. That's why He sent Zechariah to Israel, that's why He sent me the money I needed, and that's why He sent Christ for all of us. When Christ died on the cross He was "lifted up" so that when others looked at Him their eyes would be turned to heaven. This is what we need, our eyes turned to heaven so that we can see God. We tend to get so caught up in our daily lives that we forget about Him. But He never forgets us. Even when we don't believe that we deserve remembering.

REACT

When was the last time you dropped everything you were doing to think about God and what He means to you?

by Joy K. Pelto

Joy Pelto is a senior English major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Lesson 2, October 8-14

Truth or Consequences



“I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you” (Isaiah 44:22, RSV).

Sunday, October 8

Return From Hiding

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 1:1-6, 12-17

Think back to your childhood days. Remember that tragic Friday when mother specifically warned you not to play with your new superball in the house, as she rushed out the door to pick up some groceries for Sabbath? As you surveyed the spacious living room, you wondered, in your childish way, how mother could think such a small ball could do any significant damage.

But as you bounce the ball around the room, it strikes the wall and you watch in horror as the family portrait comes crashing to the floor. The glass shatters into millions of sparkling pieces. Recalling mother's warning, your heart freezes with panic in anticipation of her return. In your hurry to sweep up the glass splinters, you cut your hands in several places, but you have no time to consider the stinging pain.

You hang the picture back on the wall as straight as you can, hoping that no one will notice the difference, and you run for refuge to your bedroom. Soon mother returns from the store and calls for you to come and see the treat she has brought you. Overwhelmed by guilt, you pretend to be asleep.

Just as we in fear hide from mother's anger, so Israel as a nation isolated themselves from God

in fear of His punishment. Yet Zechariah says, God pleads with Israel to return to Him so He can again make them "overflow with prosperity" (Zech. 1:17, NIV).

A popular Christian hymn illustrates God's earnest desire for all of His children to return to Him.

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
Calling for you and for me;
At the heart's portal He's waiting and watching,
Watching for you and for me.

Why should we tarry when
Jesus is pleading,
Pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and
heed not His mercies,
Mercies for you and for me?

Time is now fleeting, the moments are passing,
Passing from you and from me;
Shadows are gathering and
death's night is coming,
Coming for you and for me.

Think of the wonderful love He
has promised,
Promised for you and for me;
Though we have sinned, He
has mercy and pardon,
Pardon for you and for me.

Come home, come home,
Ye who are weary, come home;
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
Calling, O sinner, come home!

by Christina Marsa and Kimberly Wasiczko

Christina is a premed student and Kimberly is a business major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Awaiting Our Response . . .

LOGOS

Theme: *God's earnest desire. In His love God wants to reestablish His covenant relationship with His people. He wants them to return to Him with all their hearts so that He may live within them and dwell among them.*

1. Looking Back

"Don't be like your fathers were! The earlier prophets pled in vain with them to turn from all their evil ways. 'Come, return to me,' the Lord God said. But no, they wouldn't listen; they paid no attention at all. Your fathers and their prophets are now long dead, but remember the lesson they learned, that God's Word endures! It caught up with them and punished them. Then at last they repented. 'We have gotten what we deserved from God,' they said. 'He has done just what he warned us he would'" (Zech. 1:4-6, TLB).

Garfield said, "History is but the unrolled scroll of prophecy."¹ "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."² There is a great wisdom in looking back, in appropriating the lessons of history. "Now these things are warnings for us" (1 Cor. 10:6, RSV). God expects us to learn not only from our own mistakes but also from the mistakes of others. Why were the messages of Zechariah given? What was happening to God's people that necessitated

words of warning and comfort from God?

As the result of disobedience and rebellion, the Hebrews have spent seventy years in Babylonian captivity. Cyrus the Persian King, conqueror of Babylon, allows the Jews to return to their homeland, granting them permission to rebuild the Temple. During his reign, however, construction is nearly halted owing to interference from the Samaritans, who were related to the Hebrews through intermarriage.

Political intrigue on the part of the Samaritans fueled the Hebrews' lack of trust in God, to the extent that Haggai, a contemporary prophet with Zechariah declared, "Is it then the right time for you to live in luxurious homes, when the Temple lies in ruins?" (Haggai 1:4, TLB). God's people are more concerned about their personal well-being, than they are about finishing their God-given task, the rebuilding of the Temple. There is more than a history lesson here for us. Their actions declare with unmistakable clarity that God's work is not their first priority. It makes no difference how one chooses to view the situation, how one rationalizes the events that are transpiring; whatever objective or subjective analysis may be employed, the result is still the same. God was not first in their scheme of life. We must remember that, "Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us."³

by D. G. Rand

D. G. Rand is director of campus ministries at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

It is into this milieu of events that Zechariah's message unfolds. We are focusing our attention on extremely significant parts of that message: God's return to His chosen people, and their return to Him. The reestablishment, reiteration, of a covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants centuries earlier.

Looking back on your past, what do you see as having the highest priority in your life? Having defined that priority with honesty and according to Scripture, where do you think that priority will lead you?

2. Covenant of Indemnification (read Zechariah 1:1-3, 13-17)

"Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Return to me," declares the Lord Almighty, "and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty" (Zech. 1:3, NIV).

Our actions as participants in our covenant with God do not influence in any way God's love for us; those actions, however, will determine our eternal destiny. God's continued love is the only unconditional part of the covenant. The beauty of the covenant relationship is that I am loved, cared for, no matter how low or high I may be. This contract implies strongly that results are closely tied to how we as participants relate to God's conditions. God's anger is tempered with unfathomable love. Verse two is beautifully placed in juxtaposition with verse three of Zechariah one. "The Lord was very angry with your forefathers" (verse 2, NIV). His love, however, is at least three times stronger than His anger. Only one time in verse two does He reveal His anger, but three times in verse three, He emphasizes His desire for oneness with His people. "Return to me . . . and I

will return to you." (verse 3). Then just to be sure they know where the message is coming from, God signs His name as it were three times, calling Himself "the Lord of hosts."

Zechariah underscores the covenantal relationship spoken of in verse three. "Therefore the Lord declares: I have returned to Jerusalem filled with mercy; my Temple will be rebuilt, says the Lord of Hosts, and so will all Jerusalem" (Zech. 1:16, TLB). In fact, work on the Temple stopped, while state-of-the-art construction is practiced in the suburbs. Little or no time for God's program. Generators hum late into the night, so homes can be completed on schedule. Yet, before there is evidence of really keeping their part of the covenant, God is already showing mercy, promising to guide them in rebuilding the Temple, and then declares, "Proclaim further: This is what the Lord Almighty says: "My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem" (Zech. 1:17, NIV).

The covenant of indemnification. Even while you are not yet doing your part, I, your God, have already set in motion plans for your restoration. You are going to be indemnified. The provisions of the covenant will be met fully. That's my plan, God says. All that I need is your help. "Return to me, . . . and I will return to you." "Jerusalem will be restored. Your cities will overflow with prosperity. You will be compensated for the damage you have brought upon yourselves. A covenant of indemnification.

Zechariah wrote two and a half millennia ago; not exactly modern and up-to-date, or is he? My car runs on unleaded gas. It was made to run on unleaded gas. Leaded gas is sometimes cheaper, and the car will run on leaded

gas—for a while. Then I will discover that not following the owner's manual is indeed an expensive mistake. I may make modifications on my Buick, but none can be made on me. If I want maximum performance in this life and an eternity with God, I must follow the Owner's Manual—the Bible. Looking back is one of the best ways in the world to know what is ahead, where one is going, what the future holds.

"The exiles who had returned to Judea from the land of Babylon had become utterly discouraged. Forsaking the work of rebuilding the Temple, they sought to attain temporal pros-

perity. But everything seemed against them. Work as they might, they did not prosper."⁴ Definition of the word *prosper* in the light of eternity makes Zechariah's words, though two and a half millennia old, as modern and relevant as the evening news. God is poised at this very moment to give us, in abundance, the provisions of His covenant of indemnification. He waits only for our return, for He has already made the journey from glory to where we live. He anxiously waits for our response, whether it be the first time or the one hundredth time, for a tight grip on His hand.

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1. Cromwell, *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (New York: Standard Book Company, 1954), p. 255.

2. *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

3. Peter Forsythe, *The Speaker's Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 114.

4. Joe Engelkemier, *Prepare the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1971), p. 275.

Tuesday, October 10

On Humbling and Returning

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Zechariah 1:12-17

Have you ever felt that you have sinned so much and have gone so far away from Christ that He could never forgive you? The Hebrews, though at first separated from God by their evil deeds and sinful ways, chose to return to Him. As demonstrated in the book of Zechariah, God accepted them and desired His people to return to Him. As Ellen White points out, God is merciful and will reestablish those who truly repent.

"When they [Judah] humbled themselves before God and returned to Him with true repentance, He sent them messages of encouragement, declaring that He would deliver them from captivity, restore them to His favor, and once more establish them in their own land. And now that this work of restoration had begun, and a remnant of Israel had already returned to Judea, Satan was determined to frustrate the carrying out of the divine purpose, and to this end he was seeking to move upon the heathen nations to destroy them utterly.

"But in this crisis the Lord strengthened His people 'with good words and comfortable words.' Zechariah 1:13. Through

an impressive illustration of the work of Satan and the work of Christ, He showed the power of their Mediator to vanquish the accuser of His people."¹

God still wants His people to return to Him. Today it seems even more imperative that we return to God because of all the calamities in our lives and the soon return of Christ.

"To His children today the Lord declares, 'Be strong, . . . and work: for I am with you.' The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know, but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. Could Christians realize how many times the Lord has ordered their way, that the purposes of the enemy concerning them might not be accomplished, they would not stumble along complainingly. Their faith would be stayed on God, and no trial would have power to move them. They would acknowledge Him as their wisdom and efficiency, and He would bring to pass that which He desires to work out through them."²

No matter how bad God's people have been, their sins will be forgiven if they turn to Him in repentance. God will continue to be their source of strength if they faithfully request His saving grace.

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 583.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 576.

by Kimberly Brundage

Kimberly is a psychology major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Annie Phelan and God

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Luke 15:20

Francis Phelan was a bum. His story is told in the novel *Ironweed* by William Kennedy (New York: Viking Press, 1979). Francis was a successful baseball player at the time that the sport was emerging as a popular game. His life took its downward spiral when he fatally dropped his infant son. Guilt drove Francis from his family to the street and alcohol.

Twenty-two years after rejecting his family, Francis returned home for a visit. Instead of the justifiable and expected hate, Francis found only love and acceptance from his wife, Annie. She had never revealed to anyone the cause of the death of their child. She had already forgiven him for leaving the family to struggle on their own. There was no condemnation. She meekly extended an invitation for Francis to renew his family membership. But he declined the invitation, and his decision was respected. When Francis left, Annie gave him clothes, food, and money, which he used to pursue his current lifestyle.

Annie Phelan's attitude represents God's desire to reestablish a relationship with us. When we return to God, He takes us in

without condemnation. He has kept our sins a secret. Often we reject the relationship because of guilt. But when we face the guilt and return, God is waiting and informs us that we can rebuild the former relationship.

Francis' life deteriorated after breaking his family bond. He exchanged his beautiful wife for a straying woman of the street. He began to rely on alcohol for his strength. When we leave God, we deteriorate in the same manner. Satan becomes our new partner while we rely on superficial things for security.

As Annie gave Francis clean clothes, allowed him to bathe and shave, and offered him a new start, so God offers us a new life. He gives us the power to throw off our soiled lifestyles and begin a fresh existence. Francis made the choice that each of us must make—to turn humbly toward home.

Francis left after his first visit home, but finally accepted Annie's invitation. Many of us have left God more than once, but He still gives to us the choice to be with Him without the guilt of our former life. God is the lover who waits for us to turn from our wasteful lives and enter into saving relationships with Him.

by Jonathan Peters

Jonathan is an English major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Thursday, October 12

Follow Me

HOW TO

Key Text: Matt. 16:24

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24, NIV). God desires that we surrender to Him so that He may work within and through us. God wanted the Israelites to return to Him so that He might accomplish His work through them. Before this was possible the Israelites needed to take the steps necessary to return to God. Unfortunately, many of them never accepted His redemption.

We face the same choice that the Israelites faced. There are four necessary steps for us to return to God:

1. *We must realize our helplessness.* “Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). We are nothing without God. It is only through His power that we can accomplish His purpose for our lives.

2. *We must invite Christ into our lives.* The Holy Spirit cannot

work within us if we do not want Him there. Because the Israelites did not want Christ, He was unable to use them to accomplish His purpose.

3. *We must accept Christ's teachings and apply them to our lives.* Through prayer and the study of God's Word we learn to love Jesus as Lord and Friend.

4. *We must surrender every area of our life to God.* Refusing to surrender even one area of our life gives the devil enough of a hold to separate us from God. Satan is able to use that area to keep us from fulfilling God's perfect will.

God is waiting for each of us to surrender to Him. He will not complete His work in the world without our help. Only when we give our all to God can we share Him with someone else.

REACT

How does someone become personally acquainted with a God they can neither see nor hear?

by Eric and Jolle High

Eric is a sophomore at Andrews University majoring in substance-abuse counseling, and his sister Jolie is a junior majoring in office administration.

Friday, October 13

I Have Chosen You, Regardless . . .

OPINION

Key Text: Zech. 1:17

Have you ever cared for a friend so much that you did everything in your power to make his or her life easier? You listened to his or her problems, gave advice, time, and love. You sacrificed for your friend, believing that should the roles be reversed he or she would do the same for you. Then the roles were reversed, and you were left alone. You knew you had been used—and felt so foolish.

Chances are you wouldn't trust that person so easily the next time. But let's say you did, and he or she hurt you again and again. You might wonder how someone could be so unconcerned about another's feelings. How could he or she take your friendship so casually?

Yet God's people have used Him. They have taken for granted His love from the time of the Garden of Eden, through the crossing of the desert, up to the time of

Zechariah, and even today. Still God persistently loves us and we keep on hurting Him. The extent of His love is inconceivable.

“ ‘The Lord will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem’ ”
(Zech. 1:17, NIV).

Recently I heard a song by the contemporary Christian singer Don Fransisco. The third stanza and chorus perfectly express this kind of love:

I know the devil's cut you
down and made you feel so
small.

I've seen your desperation with
your back against the wall.
But, I'll still be here beside
you, even if you've given in,
Until you see My love for you
is all you need to win.

I have chosen you, and I will
not turn you down.
I have chosen you. You were
born to wear a crown.
Through it all I've been right
by your side.
Ask Me, and you will not be
denied.

by Nicole Khalil and Randall Minnick

Nicole and Randy both attend Andrews University; Nicole is an English major, Randy is in engineering.



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Lesson 3, October 15-21

Wall of Fire



“ ‘ “For I will be to her a wall of fire round about, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within her” ’ ” (Zechariah 2:5, RSV).

Sunday, October 15

Coming Home

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 1:7—2:13

The sun was just beginning to set as I made my way home through the nearly deserted streets.

I wasn't usually this late, but a friend of mine had convinced me to stop by his house and listen to a man speak about a vision he had had earlier in the week.

Please understand, I'm not the sort of person who goes around listening to everyone who says that they have seen visions, but my friend had asked me to come, and to be quite honest, I couldn't find a way out of it.

I paused for the red stop light at the base of the bridge I had just come over, and looked at the river beneath it. The fiery red reflection of the setting sun turned each little wave into a dazzling bonfire. Who could believe the muddy Mississippi could burn so hotly.

The man said he had a vision of the Lord's people returning to Him. He said that the Lord will be their wall of fire around and their glory within. Frankly, it made me feel a little uncomfortable, but the way he said it also made it sound kind of appealing.

Beep! Beep!

Startled, I realized the light had turned green, and I quickly started down the road again.

"Come, Zion! Escape, you who live in Babylon. The Lord is coming, and He will live among you and will choose you." He kept repeating this, each time more fervently than the last.

But why tell me? It will just complicate my life. I was doing just fine until I heard this guy talk. Now I'm not so sure.

As I rounded the last corner, I felt reassured by familiar surroundings that I was close to home.

I once knew God. I mean, closer than I do now. Life seemed so pleasant and sweet. But gradually, I guess, I let little things pull me away.

"Come, Zion! Escape, you who live in Babylon. The Lord is coming, and He will live among you and will choose you." It would be nice to have those feelings again. To know that I am the Lord's and that He is my God. To have reassurance that He is with me and is my glory and protection.

Should I return to Him? A growing feeling inside me says that I should; it says that I'm not complete without Him.

I pull into my driveway and turn off the car's engine.

Lord, I've come home.

by Greg Arihood

Greg is a graduate of Andrews University with a B.S. in information science.

Great Wall of Fire

LOGOS

Theme: *The Lord your glory and protection. In the first three visions the Lord shows Zechariah that, as the people return to Him, He becomes their God and they become His people. He will dwell in their midst and become their glory and their protection. The same promise is for us today.*

1. The Man Among the Myrtle Trees—God's Plan for Israel (read Zechariah 1:7-17)

Zechariah was God's messenger to a tired and discouraged people. These were the same people who had been so positive about their future just a short time before, when they returned to their homeland and started to rebuild their city. Now it seemed that all was at a standstill, and their courage was lower than the foundation of the city walls. The people felt as if one of the huge building stones from the city wall had been dropped on them—from a height of 50 feet or so—and they needed encouragement.

What were some of the examples from Judah's past history from which the people could have found encouragement? Look up Genesis 37:23-27; 41:39-44; Joshua 6:1-15. Here are three stories of deliverance that should encourage any individual or nation. Yet when problems stare us right in the face we seem to develop a case of tunnel vision and focus only on the problems—forgetting

that God wants to be our protector, our "wall of fire."

If you have ever been the one who carried the map on a back-packing trip, you probably have heard "How much farther is it now?" many times. And as the day gets hotter and the trail more difficult, you have probably told your group that it is just a little farther to the spring, the campsite, or the car. Or if you are a parent and have been on a trip in a crowded car with small children, you have also given the message, "We're just about home. These are words that seem to revive spirits and make the last few miles a little more bearable.

"Therefore, this is what the Lord says, "I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt" (Zech. 1:16, NIV). These words were spoken to let the people know that God cared for them and loved them. He still would be their God if they returned to Him.

2. The Horns and the Carpenters—God's Helpers for Israel (read Zechariah 1:18-21).

If your car has ever broken down on the highway then you will remember what a relief it was to see the tow truck pull up and the mechanic walk up and offer help. The people of Zechariah's day needed help. Help to get their stalled building projects back on schedule. Help to get their broken plans on track. So God sends in the repair men, the

by David L. Rasmussen

David Rasmussen is an assistant dean of men at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

carpenters, the plumbers, the craftsmen, as the NIV puts it, to bring courage to the hearts of His people. The master Craftsman, Himself, came to this earth to give courage to people when much of the world lived in despair (see John 4:16-29). God did not send angels in flaming chariots to help the Hebrews. He sent carpenters and plumbers—the kind of help they needed at that moment. It seems that we have a very wise and practical God, who knows our needs and sends the right person at the right time.

3. The Man and the Measuring Line—God's Plan for Judah.

A sand castle has to have buffer walls. It needs these walls to delay the inevitable end for all sand castles. Cities in the time of Zechariah needed walls to give the inhabitants of the city some security and sense of safety. We build walls around ourselves to keep from being hurt, to give our fragile egos a sense of invulnerability. God doesn't need walls of sand, or stone, or anger. He uses fire. A divine cleansing fire that destroys all that is impure or unholy (Rev. 20:9). When God builds

walls for the New Jerusalem, He puts gates in those walls, gates that are never closed (Rev. 21:25). In the third vision that God gave to Zechariah, He tries to help the people see that He has big plans for them. If the people had kept this message in mind the results would have been staggering. Instead of a small city with solid-stone walls that could be knocked down, God wanted His people to spread the news that He was their protection. They did not need to depend on the strength of their armies to protect their loved ones and possessions. They needed to rely on God's promises that whoever attempted to attack Judah would be so utterly defeated that they would end up servants. God's plans to defend His people from the attacks of Satan are activated by our simple request for that protection. By our turning our lives over to God each morning and claiming His protection our future is secure. In God we must trust.

What could I be doing in my life that separates me from God's plans for my life?

What steps must I take to remove that separation?

The Lord in Your Midst

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Zechariah 2:5

"The assaults of Satan are strong, his delusions subtle; but the Lord's eye is upon His people. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but Jesus will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire."¹

Reflecting back on your childhood, do you remember Mom or Dad reading you those Bible stories where God seemed to help just in time? And do you remember thinking that God didn't seem to get around to you as He did with Queen Esther or Daniel in the lions' den? These feelings were probably not too foreign to us when we were children; and perhaps even now we occasionally question whether God is really looking out for us.

But just as God promised to watch over and care for His people centuries ago, He extends that same promise to His people today. Consider these different promises of God as they are represented in the writings of Ellen White:

"Often men are tempted to falter before the perplexities and obstacles that confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make the way clear. Success will come to them as they

struggle against difficulties."²

"Not one soul who in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power."³

"As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses those who seek the mercy and favor of God. He is 'the accuser of our brethren, . . . which accused them before our God day and night.' Revelation 12:10. Over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil, and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life, the controversy is repeated. Never is one received into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the enemy. But He who was the hope of Israel then, their defense, their justification and redemption, is the hope of the church today."⁴

Each of these promises assures us that God stands in our midst. And if the fulfillment of His promises seems less dramatic today than it did for our familiar Bible heroes and heroines, we can be just as sure that He is ready to help us, whatever the nature of our need.

REACT

What are some other thoughts in Ellen White's writings that indicate to us God's promises still hold fast for us as Christians today?

What do we need to do to receive God's promise?

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 589.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 595.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 587.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 585.

by Melissa Barnhart

Melissa is a physical-therapy major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Wednesday, October 18

The Deliverance in the Song

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Psalm 91:2

"In all Jewish traditions the transmission of music . . . [was] mainly oral."¹ In other words, it was passed on verbally as opposed to being a written manuscript. "The principal music was the singing of the Psalms and parts of the Pentateuch."² These songs held and still hold a rich heritage for the people of Israel, showing the successes and failures of the nation. They also served the purpose of reminding the Israelites of the faithfulness of the Lord to deliver them from their oppressors and even from their own stubborn wickedness.

At least two times in Old Testament history were the servants of the Lord brought into captivity by another nation, and then released. The first time they were made to serve as slaves in Egypt, and then freed (after a little arm breaking). Another was the abduction to Babylon, and the seventy years of exile, after which time they were permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

After each incident songs were composed celebrating the Lord's leading. Shortly after the Egyptian army had been swallowed up

in the waters of the Red Sea, there was a song in the air (see Ex. 15:1-18). This was also true after the release from Babylonian captivity. Psalm 147 is just one of the many restoration Psalms. The song begins, "Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God. . . . The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel" (verses 1, 2, NIV). Praise and exaltation are evident to the last verses. "He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws. Praise the Lord" (verses 19, 20, NIV).

These are just a few examples of songs that are relevant to our lesson this week. The Jewish oral tradition as found in Scripture is rich with beautiful songs—songs that are a tribute to God and His faithful dealings with the Israelites, and His dealing with you and me.

REACT

1. Read Exodus 15 and Psalm 147. What are their similarities?
2. Look through the hymnal to find songs that would be relevant to today's lesson.
3. Write a psalm showing how God has been victorious in your life this week.

1. Don Randel, ed. "Jewish Music. V. Transmission." *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 419.

2. Harold Gleason and Warren Becker. "Introduction . . . IV. Jewish Music." *Music in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Bloomington, Indiana: Frangipani Press, 1981), p. 2.

by Edward Pelto

Edward Pelto is a music major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Thursday, October 19

Staying in God's Presence

HOW TO

Key Text: Matthew 28:20

What a comfort it is to know that God is always waiting for us to return to Him. And what a joy it is to know we can dwell in His presence and experience His protection when we come to Him. He says, "Come to Me and dwell in My presence and rejoice in My peace." When we live in God's presence we experience peace.

How can we live in God's presence?

1. *Try relational Bible study.*

While studying a Bible passage, especially in the Gospels, pray an honest prayer to God, telling Him about the feelings you experienced while reading that passage. Meditate on the passage. Imagine yourself as one of the characters in the story. Ask yourself: What does this passage teach me about Christ? What does it teach me about the characters in

the story? What does it teach me about myself?

2. *Study and pray in small groups.* Remember the promise that where two or three are gathered in God's name there He will be. Also, there is strength in numbers, and two heads are better than one. Since none of us see things the same way, we can often benefit from the viewpoints of others.

3. *Remember, we are always in God's presence.* God's presence is always with us. Our senses need to be awakened to perceive this wonderful fact. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent" (Num. 23:19); so when God promises "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20), we can believe Him because He does not lie.

REACT

If it is true that we are always in God's presence how should this influence the way we act? Why?

by Hiram Moretta and Peter Miller

Hiram is a medical-technology major, and Peter is an engineering major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Friday, October 20

Faith During Hard Times

OPINION

Key Text: Genesis 17:17

Have you ever had a day when it seemed that your life had gotten off track? Maybe all of the term papers you put off for weeks are now due. Maybe you lost your job and are having a hard time with school bills. There are many versions of "the day that went wrong."

When we're sailing along and things are going well it is easy to feel that God is watching over us. But when everything goes wrong (which often happens during exam week) that feeling leaves. Then it is hard to have faith, because, right then, we can't see what God is doing for us. It seems as if God is inactive in our lives and has left us on our own.

The message God sends to Israel through Zechariah is one of encouragement. The people had become unaware of God's protecting presence because of all the hardships they were experiencing. They seemed to forget God's promise that the Messiah would be born from the nation of Israel. God wanted to reassure His people of His continual presence.

When God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son, Abraham laughed, "Will a son be

born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (Gen. 17:17, NIV). Abraham couldn't see how God was working. In his perception, what God was saying just couldn't be true. But later, with the birth of Isaac, it became evident that God really would make Abraham and Sarah the parents of a great nation. If Abraham had had total faith in God's plan from the beginning, he could have avoided the suffering Hagar and Ishmael had to endure.

Sometimes Satan would have us believe that we really aren't part of God's plan. The tempter wants us to believe there is no hope. But in the biblical example of Israel, it is clear that God doesn't give up on His people when they make mistakes. Many, many times Israel turned from God. Yet, Christ was still born from that nation as had been promised.

If we yield to the lie that God isn't really working in us, we have pleased Satan. Because if we lose faith in God, we have no strength to carry out God's plans. During hard times God has encouragement for us just as He did for Israel. You can find it in the Bible. And remember, God is protecting you, even though you are not aware of it!

by Angela Wiant

Angela Wiant is a behavioral-sciences major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Lesson 4, October 22-28

A Brand Plucked From Burning



“And the Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?’” (Zechariah 3:2, RSV).

Sunday, October 22

The Soul Who Stares Back

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 3:1-10

Bang! Bang! Bang! The gavel falls, echoing brokenly through the small room.

Eyes follow the silence, coming to rest on a young man who stands disheveled and defiant at the door. He is led forward wearing a striped uniform and handcuffs. His baggy pants are torn, knees exposed, skinned, and raw. Blood stains cover his heart. His face, however, betrays his youth.

A finely dressed personage stands on his right. "What are your charges?" asks the presiding judge. The aristocratic accuser reaches deliberately into his jacket pocket and pulls out an exquisitely penned roll of paper. All in the room watch as it flows out of his coat in an endless line of black and red scribbles. He reads: "I demand the death penalty for this convicted criminal."

Deliberately, and with feigned sadness, he purrs on: "He is charged with misbehavior, covetousness, jealousy, envy, deceit, white lies, backbiting, boasting, disobedience, pride, gossip, intolerance, immorality, judging, impatience, temper tantrums, depression, hypocrisy."

The youth, at first self-contained and arrogant, begins to dart restless, uneasy glances at his tormentor. Finding no respite from the barrage of faults, his eyes, large and dark, begin to

take on shades of remorse.

The smooth voice saturated with self-righteous condemnation and smug satisfaction drones on endlessly: "He is found lacking in faith, knowledge, courage, prayer, temperance, self-control, and most certainly love."

The room becomes stifling with the "tap-tap" of the recording machine, and the haunting struggle being enacted.

The delinquent turns his bloody heart toward his judge, and lifts despairing eyes in a dejected plea for mercy.

The desperate saga for life or death continues around them as their eyes meet. The judge's eyes hold forgiveness, hope.

"Enough!" asserts the judge, regarding the prosecutor with a penetrating glance. "I must reprimand you, counsel; this youth is acquitted and delivered from the electric chair. He is a brand plucked from the fire. I have been sentenced for him, and he is free."

The youth gasps.

The prosecutor gapes.

"Therefore," continues the judge to an astonished audience, "change his clothes—those rags don't become him. Have him shave and comb his hair."

The young man gazes incredulously at his Saviour. Changed and dressed, he is transformed into a new person. Released into the sunshine, he sees a reflection of himself in the mirror of a parked car. Aghast, he peers closely into the glass, for the soul that stares back is my own.

by Karohn Young

Karohn Young is a special-education/behavioral-sciences major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Out of the Ashes

LOGOS

Key Text: Zechariah 3:1-10

Theme: *Righteousness for you. This lesson reveals the vast difference between the character of Christ and that of Satan, as well as their contrasting attitudes toward people. Satan wants to accuse and destroy, but Christ defends and saves with His mercy and righteousness.*

The important issue to grasp in the study of Zechariah 3 is that God and Satan are warring factions, and *God wins*. What is at stake is the salvation of mankind. If the warring factions would become Satan and mankind, Satan would win because his implied charges are a true and faithful depiction of humanity's condition. But this is a very biased court if you choose to look at Zechariah 3 as a court scene. The judge sets aside the evidence and rehabilitates mankind in ten meaning-packed verses.

In life—in many ways—Satan has the advantage, since he is not bound by integrity. He presents the temptation, records the failure, and makes his case. In settling the case, God is bound by flawless integrity. He must acknowledge humanity's condition; then, through Jesus, exchange places with fallen people in the satisfaction of eternal justice. Some would raise the question *Is that fair?* The real unfairness is that apparently so few are willing

to place themselves at the mercy of the Court.

A walk through Zechariah 3 is very revealing. Read Zechariah 3:1-3.

People are represented in this scenario in the person of the high priest Joshua. Joshua, standing before the Angel of the Lord, is filthy—the worst kind of filth, yet he is standing in God's presence. Also standing there is Satan in his best caricature of an accuser. His role is obvious, but he does *not* receive a hearing. His charges are not dignified by opportunities for dialogue. He is dismissed—excused. No—humanity will have its chance—Joshua is a “brand plucked from the fire.” God chooses to redeem His people once more. But now that He has this filthy, sooty stick, what can He do with it? “Strip him down—clean him up and dress him in the best” (Zech. 3:4, 5, paraphrased). Note, Joshua still was not very much in the picture—all this was done *for him*. His part here is to listen. “I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.” God is in charge of our cleansing, and He is not about to settle for just clean. Incidentally, it seems more than coincidental that a clean turban is signaled out as important—could this be a clean mind perhaps? God replaces Joshua's filthy clothing with clean rich clothing. Revelation 3:17 and Matthew 22:11 come to mind. God provides the kingly robe He requires. Finally, “The Angel of the Lord ad-

by P. B. Morrison

P. B. Morrison is a chaplain at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

monished Joshua, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: "If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command, then you shall also judge My house, and likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk among these who stand here. Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign; for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription," says the Lord of hosts. "And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day," says the Lord of hosts, "everyone will invite his neighbor

under his vine and under his fig tree" ' ' (Zech. 3:6-10, NKJV).

Such beautiful messianic speech reminds us that what God requires He empowers humanity to accomplish. The quote "brand plucked from the fire" (Zech. 3:2) is set aside in the story by the "BRANCH" (Zech. 3:8).

This is not a sooty, filthy, worthless fire stick. Because of this BRANCH, full life is possible now and for eternity (cf. John 15).

Why is it important to isolate Satan and the Angel of the Lord as the antagonists in this depiction? What is our role? Why can't humans dress themselves? What will it take for us to recognize what God wants us to do?

“Remnant” and the World

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Zechariah 3:2, NASB

In the study of world religions, one key point stands out among all other teachings—salvation is through self. Buddha taught that we “should be a light unto ourselves.” Hinduism, a religion that encompasses 30,000,000 gods, is centered on the belief that people can escape from the cycle of reincarnation through good Karma (works), or else they may be forced to live for millennia. The Jains believe that all life is suffering. To escape suffering is to reject the senses—reject the self.

Christianity claims that people can be saved without works. When Christ came to this earth nearly two thousand years ago He gave us the gift of salvation when He died on the cross of Calvary. According to Ellen White:

“The spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb’s book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon’s roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter’s devices.”¹

“Now is reached the complete

fulfillment of those words of the Angel [in Zech. 3:8, 9]: ‘Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth My servant the Branch.’ Christ is revealed as the Redeemer and Deliverer of His people. Now indeed are the remnant “men wondered at,” as the tears and humiliation of their pilgrimage give place to joy and honor in the presence of God and the Lamb. ‘In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem.’”²

Indeed, we are a remnant in our religion, in our belief, in our hope. We are a remnant in the midst of a world filled with suffering, heartache, and iniquity. But like Joshua, we must stand humble before the Lord—walk in the ways of the Lord.

REACT

1. How can we live humbly before God and walk in *all* His ways?
2. What makes us as Seventh-day Adventist Christians the remnant among this desperate world that longs for meaning to life?

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 475.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 476.

by Michael G. Hasel

Michael G. Hasel is majoring in religion and German and minoring in anthropology at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Wednesday, October 25

Rescued From the Flames

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Zechariah 3:1-10, NASB

The third chapter of Zechariah, which pictures a scene of judgment, captures the central theme of the book—righteousness by faith. Satan stands on the right hand of Joshua, for it is the custom of the accuser to stand at the right hand of the accused (cf. Job 1:6; Ps. 109:6; Rev. 12:10).¹ Perhaps, we muse, Joshua is frightened, his knees shaking. Yet, I see a Joshua standing humbly but firm in his faith, a Joshua who knows destruction is near, but still clings to his Lord. Suddenly Yahweh speaks, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

Joshua is that brand, but what is the fire? The Hebrew word for fire, *es*, is not associated with evil or sin, but with the punishment of exile from which Joshua is delivered. Like an invaluable letter that is thrown into the fire and then quickly rescued from the flames, Joshua has felt a taste of the punishment of Yahweh. He knows that the consequence of sin is death, but he has been plucked from the fire and given “festal robes” to replace his filthy garments (verse 4) and a clean tur-

ban as a covering for his head (verse 5).

These “festal robes” and the “turban” referred to in verses 4 and 5 bring another aspect to the concept of righteousness by faith. Job 29:14, NASB, reads, “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban.” Thus, justification becomes part of righteousness by faith. Joshua is justified and his punishment for the “iniquity” (Heb. *awon*), the general term for Israel’s sinful disposition and guilt, is “taken . . . away” (Zech. 3:4).²

But God goes beyond forgiveness and justification. He says to Joshua, “If you will walk in My ways, and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts” (verse 7, NASB). Also see Isa. 62:9.

In verse 7 God continues, “And I will grant you free access among these who are standing here.” This is the third component, glorification. God will finally glorify Joshua by giving him free access to heaven. For us today righteousness by faith means: justification, sanctification, and glorification. “For behold, I am going to bring in My Servant the Branch” (verses 8, 9, NASB). The Lord is the Branch,³ and we are the brands plucked from the fire.

1. C. F. Kell and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Vol. XI (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 257.

2. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), p. 114.

3. Peter C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1985), vol. 2, p. 174.

by Michael G. Hasel

Michael G. Hasel is majoring in religion and German and minoring in anthropology at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Bullets in the Afternoon

HOW TO

Key Text: Zechariah 3:4

At 10:49 a.m. on a warm sunny day the security of First National Bank sent an emergency call to the downtown police station. An armed robbery was taking place, and it was possible that some hostages might be involved. Paul Shepard, a member of the SWAT team, was on duty and stepped into action. Arriving on the scene of the robbery, Paul took up a defensive position behind a parked car. Through the course of the afternoon Paul remained behind the car even though his muscles were growing tired and his stress level was rising. Around 4:17 p.m. Paul was ordered into action. As he entered the building, a loud shot rang out, and a bullet from the robber's gun struck him in the chest. Paul fell backwards onto the sidewalk. Shaking with shock he realized he was still alive. His bullet-proof vest had stopped the bullet and saved his life.

Just as Paul's bullet-proof vest saved his life from a bullet, Christ can save our lives by shielding us from Satan's darts and by covering us with His righteousness. How does Christ achieve this?

1. *God's love is unconditional.*

God asks us to follow Him, but doesn't force Himself on us.

Satan, on the other hand, wants everything for himself and will do whatever it takes to get what he wants.

2. *All have sinned.* We all have sinned, but Christ can forgive and clothe us in His righteousness. Zechariah 3:4, NIV, says, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."

3. *God's plan for us.* " "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here" " (Zech. 3:6, 7 NIV). We don't always do what's asked of us, because that is our nature. God is not pleased when we don't follow Him, but if Plan A doesn't work, He moves like a parent to Plan B. Like disciplined children we finally learn what is best and try to follow Him.

REACT

1. Why do you think God keeps looking after us and protecting us even when we sin?

2. When will God's patience end for (a) us personally, (b) the world?

by Sheela Bahtula and Janelle Denny

Sheela and Janelle are freshmen at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Friday, October 27

Something's Different in Court!

OPINION

Key Text: Romans 8:31-34

This court scene is all wrong! No lawyer in a modern trial would allow his client to dress like this fellow Joshua. "Get a new suit and tie," he would insist. "You absolutely must make a good impression on the judge." Instead, we see him dressed in his grubbies. Some lawyer!

The next thing wrong is the constitution of the court. Joshua is standing before the Angel of the Lord while the attorney for the prosecution makes his charges. The Judge, God, is in His place. There are some unnamed people standing by as witnesses or jury or something. Some of Joshua's "fellows" are sitting nearby—maybe spectators. But Joshua seems to be all alone. Now where did that lawyer go?

If the charge is dirty clothes (unrighteousness), he may be in trouble! It appears to be a capital case. The contemplated punishment—burning—is reserved for the very worst offenders. This fellow Satan seems sure of himself. He is so out of place here, yet he stands boldly before the Angel and makes his charges. "It's a clear case of iniquity," he says, "not just a mistake. This Joshua is a habitual offender. He did not

merely slip up a few times or make some innocent mistakes. I move for a verdict of guilty!"

Now that stirred things up! But something's still not quite right. Nobody in this scene is designated as a lawyer for the defense. The defendant makes no plea. His fellows are silent. No witnesses are called. The Judge is going to pass sentence immediately. This court case is unlike any I have ever known. Something is dreadfully wrong!

I look at this ill-dressed man and see myself. I look at the adversary and tremble as he turns his malevolent and knowing eyes on me. I realize he is waiting to accuse me as well—that my name is next. My clothes too are just filthy rags. I am one of those unnamed "fellows" sitting near Joshua. I turn and see you there behind me. It's not just Joshua's case being decided this day. It's mine. It's yours!

REACT

1. How do you feel when the Judge says: "You're out of order, Satan. There's no fire for this one. Case dismissed!"?
2. What is implied in the "new suit" that finally shows up, and which the Judge provides?
3. What do you think about Satan's suggestion that the trial is rigged?

by Charles Armistead

Charles Armistead is a former pastor presently earning an MA in English at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Lesson 5, October 29—November 4

By My Spirit



“So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty’ ” (Zechariah 4:6, NIV).

Sunday, October 29

By My Spirit

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 4:1-14

“Not by power nor by might,
But by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty.

Up to Solomon’s majestic height
The Temple, Zerubbabel tried to fix.
Not by power nor by might
Learned Zechariah in his vision flight.
The Temple would be built, not with tricks,
“But by My Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty.

And the same holds true in our earthly fight.
Our sinful natures we cannot fix
Not by power nor by might,
Nor by any earth-bound delight,
Not even by some human mix,
“But by My Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty.

Only by submitting to His glorious light
Can we let God our holy temples fix,
“Not by power nor by might,
But by My Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty.

by Steven Durest

Steven Durest has graduated with a B.A. in English and religion from Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

All Systems Go

LOGOS

Theme: *The Spirit overcomes. Despite seemingly insurmountable problems, the Spirit of God will overcome all obstacles and complete God's work in the earth. Through the Spirit's power our lives are made purified temples for God's permanent indwelling.*

1. The Lampstand

"He asked me, 'What do you see?' I answered, 'I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights'" (Zech. 4:2, NIV).

In this complex prophetic symbolism we see a lampstand, a very large one, that has seven arms to it, and seven little lamps at the ends of the arms. At the top of the lampstand is a bowl that feeds the wicks. The lampstand is solid gold, so that when the lamp is lit, it emits tremendous light. The lampstand represents Israel, the covenant people of God, who are to shine as lights to all the world. These lights are also called "eyes" (verse 10), because it was thought that the eye was the source of light (see Matt. 6:22). The restored people of Israel are to be like a light shining in the darkness, penetrating the gloom surrounding all people, and drawing all nations to the worship of the true God of light and life (Zech. 2:11; Isa. 60:1-3; Matt. 5:14-16; John 1:4, 5, 9; Acts 13:47).

But Zerubbabel and the people of Israel possessed no kingly power to accomplish the task of rebuilding and restoration by themselves. God helped them understand that it wasn't their power, or their strength, that would make for success. The bowl of oil was symbolic of the bountiful reservoir of power and grace available through the Holy Spirit.

Each of us is given a lamp, as brought out in Jesus' parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). The symbol of a lampstand was not new to Zerubbabel. He knew about it and its significance because of the lampstand in the sanctuary. It is not new to us either. It is a reminder to each of us that we have available all the power and grace of Christ.

2. The Oil

"So he said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.'" "Again I asked him, 'What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?'" (Zech. 4:6, 12, NIV).

The bowl at the top of the lampstand was full of oil. This was how people used lamps in Zechariah's day. They took a bowl of oil, put in a wick, probably by tying the wick around a stone, and the lamp would burn for some time. In Zechariah's vision the bowl had many wicks and could burn continuously because a bowl of oil fed it. The bowl was

by Sharon Klatt

Sharon Klatt is minister of nurture for the Atlantic Union College Church, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

also at the top of this lamp, so there was little chance of the wick's running dry. Gravity would ensure that the wick would burn continuously unless the bowl was empty.

"The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit."^{*} The bowl is typical of the bountiful supply. This was the point the angel was trying to make to Zerubbabel. The Spirit was there, would he and the people be willing? Actually, all it would take to make the rebuilding project a success was simple faith in God. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we become willing.

What does it take on our part to have the Spirit working in us? Many think they have the Spirit, but don't. How can we know that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives?

3. The Olive Trees

"Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." "I asked the angel, 'What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?' "He said, 'These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth'" (Zech. 4:3, 11, 14, NIV).

When Zechariah raises questions about the olive trees and two branches that he noticed, the angel answered by saying, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth" (verse 14, NIV). In the immediate context the olive trees probably refer to Joshua and Zerubbabel, the religious and civil heads of the nation mentioned in chapters 3 and 4. But in the eschatological sense the two olive trees speak of One who is coming who will be both priest and king (see Zech. 6:12, 13), namely, Jesus Christ. Christ is the true supply

of oil because He gives the Holy Spirit in abundance (see John 14:16, 17; 15:26; 16:7-15).

How does "Not by might nor by power" come into play in our relationship to Christ?

4. Light (read Zech. 4:2)

Zerubbabel took God up on His offer. Wouldn't you? Maybe we should put it in today's terms.

It reminds us of the pictures we conjure up of money growing on trees. That's exactly what it meant to Zerubbabel. Picture this: You are given a checkbook, an account number, and all the money you want in the account. There are no strings attached, you can write as many checks as you wish, because the account is automatically kept full. It would be impossible to spend all the money. Now tell me you wouldn't use the checkbook! The sad truth is, many of us are not using the checkbook. Zerubbabel "used the checkbook." The result? He accomplished his impossible task in five short years. There is an interesting thing about light. You can't really touch it. It infuses everything. And you certainly can see it. So it is when we are filled with God's Spirit. We're writing "checks on the account," and our friends, neighbors, will see the "light." The light is a reflection of Christ, and results from the working of the Spirit in our lives.

Are you certain that there is a "spiritual account" for you in heaven? If you believe that you have an "unlimited account" what keeps you from writing checks? How do you start? Are we sometimes afraid of the light? Are we helping other people to see the light, and how can we know that we are faithfully reflecting the light?

^{*} Christ's Object Lessons, p. 407.

Living Channels

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Malachi 4:2

"In the work of God, humanity can originate nothing. No man can by his own effort make himself a light bearer for God. It was the golden oil emptied by the heavenly messengers into the golden tubes, to be conducted from the golden bowl into the lamps of the sanctuary, that produced a continuous bright and shining light. It is the love of God continually transferred to man that enables him to impart light. Into the hearts of all who are united to God by faith the golden oil of love flows freely, to shine out again in good works, in real, heartfelt service for God.

"In the great and measureless gift of the Holy Spirit are contained all of heaven's resources. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit.

"It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so

much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.

"Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Emmanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives.

"The indwelling of the Spirit will be shown by the outflowing of heavenly love. The divine fullness will flow through the consecrated human agent, to be given forth to others.

"The Sun of Righteousness has 'healing in his wings.' Mal. 4:2. So from every true disciple is to be diffused an influence for life, courage, helpfulness, and true healing."*

REACT

1. In what way(s) can we be unwilling to be living channels for the Holy Spirit?

2. How can we be surrounded "with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace"? How does one achieve such a spiritual state in their Christian life?

3. What can we do if we sense that "His own joy" is *not* revealed in our lives?

*Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 418, 419.

by Richard L. Trott

Richard L. Trott is campus chaplain of Atlantic Union College, serving there since 1977. He is currently also serving as assistant professor of religion and associate pastor of the College Church.

Wednesday, November 1

Get the Spirit!

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Romans 8:1

In the key text for this week's lesson (Zech 4:6) Zechariah, a member of the Levite tribe, is given a vision of the golden candlestick and two olive trees. By this time (c.a. 520 B.C.) the Jews had been back in Jerusalem about sixteen years.* They had become discouraged in their rebuilding of the Temple because of a lack in resources. It had come to the point where they had stopped building altogether. Everyone expected that the permission granted to rebuild the Temple would be revoked any day. In comparison, their enemies seemed to be guaranteed success. The Jews were sure there was no way they could ever finish the building of the Temple at this rate.

However God knew in His omniscience, that the Temple would be finished. As He says through the angel in Zechariah 4:6, the Temple would not be finished by might or power, but by His

Spirit—the Holy Spirit. The Jews didn't need mortal might and power! So what if their enemies **appeared** capable of overcoming them—they had the Spirit! He was capable of overcoming their enemies!

If ever in doubt about the Spirit's power, look at yourself and others around you. God has the ability to take us the way we are—wretched, self-absorbed sinners, and transform us into loving, Christlike Christians. That takes power! If ever you have tried to change someone to be the way **you** think they should be, you can identify with feelings of discouragement and frustration experienced by the people. Just like the Jews, we lack the might and power it takes. But when we surrender our life to the workings of the Spirit, He doesn't give up. The Holy Spirit knows He will succeed, no matter what the obstacles, as long as we allow Him.

How about you? Have you received the Holy Spirit into your life?

*SDA Bible Commentary (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1955), vol. 4, p. 1085.

by Joy Damon

Joy Damon is an elementary-education student at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Thursday, November 2

Catch the Spirit!

HOW TO

Key Text: Zechariah 4:6

Catch the Spirit—was the theme for Atlantic Union College during the 1987/1988 school year. We stressed the significance of catching the spirit of academic progress, friendship, and cultural diversity on our campus. But even more important than catching the spirit of AUC was catching the *Holy Spirit*.

In the lesson this week, Zechariah caught the Holy Spirit. Although he did not fully understand what God was trying to say to him through the symbolic dream, he accepted it. Zechariah spoke with the angel of God, and the Spirit worked in him so that he *would* be able to understand.

Many times we become discouraged because of personal problems in our lives and we tend to feel as if God has let us down. In fact, it can become so frustrating that we may even blame God for what has happened. But, no matter how big the problems we face, the Holy Spirit can overcome them just as He did centuries ago with Zechariah.

The question now is whether or not we allow the Spirit to work in us. That's the difference between our experience and Zechariah's experience. God cannot make a dwelling place for His Spirit in us if we are not willing to let Him do so. In Colossians 2:5 Paul says, "Though I am absent from you in body, I am present

with you in spirit" (NIV). Hebrews 13:5 says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (NIV).

As Christians facing a hostile world, where many obstacles can interrupt or ruin our relationship with the Lord, we need the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How is this possible?

1. Pray and Ask God for His Spirit. Constant prayer is the key. It is an important communication channel between us and God.

Christ promised He would send us the Comforter (John 16:7). All we need to do is ask.

2. Allow God to Work Within Your Heart. Be open and receptive to what God wants to do for you. We cannot receive the presence of the Spirit by just asking for it, we must also be willing for Him to work in and through our lives as He sees fit.

3. Share Your Experience of the Holy Spirit With Others.

When a basketball team is successful, people not only appreciate the individual members' skills, but the team spirit is also passed from players to fans. It is the same with Christians. Once we've caught the Spirit we must share Him with others, as well. That's what keeps God's "team" alive!

REACT

God wants to give us His Spirit, but He will not force us to accept Him. What makes us so unwilling to receive the Holy Spirit into our lives?

by Ruth Nunez

Ruth Nunez is majoring in business administration at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Friday, November 3

New Beginnings

OPINION

Key Text: 2 Timothy 1:7

How many of us allow disappointments and defeats to rob us of new beginnings—much like the player in the 1929 Georgia Tech-Cumberland football game who ran the wrong way late in the first half? He was so devastated over his error that he sat on the bench with his head between his hands during the second half, paralyzed by his mistake—until his coach came to his side and pleaded with him to go back out onto the field. . . .

“Here is encouragement for despondent and timid Christians. *Jesus Christ is not going to leave you half way across the bog.* That is not His manner of guiding us. He began; He will finish.”¹ “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6, NKJV). We do not need to wait until we have a great amount of faith, for Jesus told us that the exercise of a mustard seed of faith would move mountains. The message of Zechariah 4 is given to encourage Zerubbabel to build the Temple so that the spiritual life of Israel can be restored.

“Observe, these Scriptures do

not say that there are no enemies, no mountains, no difficulties. They do not make the salvation of the Church that light thing which some of us make it. On the contrary, they suppose it to be in itself a work of the utmost difficulty. But then, Christ, they tell us, is more than equal to it; He is mighty to save; He can prepare His people for heaven and carry them there, in spite of everything.”²

The church faces many problems that need to be addressed. And on the personal level we face many decisions as we prepare for vocation, family, and God’s service. Let’s be constructive in what we say—of others, of the church, and even of ourselves (in our self-talk).

“You judge according to outward appearance and not according to My Word. According to outward appearance the work is insignificant; and yet My Words are glorious. But if you believed My Words, the insignificant beginning would not offend you.”³

REACT

1. How can we avoid causing discouragement to others? How can we best cope with our own discouragement?

2. Was the Temple Zerubbabel built more important than the temple each of us is building?

1. Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture—Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1906), p. 306.

2. Talbot W. Chambers, *The Book of Zechariah* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1874), p. 45.

3. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), p. 228.

by Howard Savage

Howard Savage is a junior majoring in personal ministries at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Lesson 6, November 5-11

The Genie in the Jar



“ ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other” ’ ” (Zechariah 7:9, 10, NIV).

Sunday, November 5

The Call and the Answer

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 5:1; 6:8

The Call

“Who will accept, O precious Earth,
The Lord Almighty’s homeward call?
Who will heal our Saviour’s hurt?
Who will accept, O precious Earth?
Who will leave their earthly mirth
To live in Heaven’s Eden’s mall?
Who will accept, O precious Earth,
The Lord Almighty’s homeward call?”

The Answer

“We will accept, though we be few,
For we have put away our wicked deeds.
We do wish to be made anew.
We will accept, though we be few.
And God’s commandments we will do.
Trusting to Him our every need.
We will accept, though we be few,
For we have put away our wicked deeds.”

by Steven Durest

Steven Durest is a graduate of Atlantic Union College, holding a B.A. and departmental honors in both English and religion.

Monday, November 6

Flights for God

LOGOS

Theme: *Conditions to acceptance. God is willing to return to us, cover us with His righteousness, and fill us with His Spirit. Are we willing to accept Him, forsake our sins, and be spiritually fruitful? He is coming in judgment. Will we be condemned, or will we be vindicated?*

1. Introduction

"The word of the Lord came to Zechariah . . . the prophet"
(Zechariah 1:7, RSV).

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah in a series of eight night visions. The first and last deal with the relationship of God's people to the surrounding nations while the central six visions concentrate on Judah and the peculiar problems of God's people.

Most of the visions seem a bit sketchy, so evidently the narrative elements are not too important. They are a bit like parables, where it is a mistake to try and interpret every element of the story; rather it is the punch line that is important. So with these visions: it is the "word of God" at the end that is clear.

The visions do share a standard pattern:

1. Zechariah says "I lifted my eyes,"
2. the vision is recounted
3. a question is asked, and
4. Zechariah receives an answer: the word of the Lord.

Our lesson this week covers the concluding three visions, the first five having been studied in previous lessons.

2. The Flying Scroll:

Vision 6 (read Zechariah 5:1-4)

"This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land"
(Zech. 5:3, RSV).

Zechariah's sixth vision is brief. He saw a flying scroll. It was the equivalent of a flying book, since in Bible times books appeared in the form of scrolls. This scroll represented the Word of God materialized.

The angel asked Zechariah to describe what he saw. The prophet's attempt to do this was his first step toward understanding the meaning of the vision. He noticed that the scroll's dimensions were 30 by 15 feet (a cubit being about 18 inches long). Is it accidental that those dimensions match those of the Most Holy Place in the wilderness tabernacle? If not, perhaps this size indicates the recipients of the scroll will be measured by the divine standard.

Though the exact contents of the scroll are not revealed, the angel does say it is a "curse" aimed at thieves and perjurers. By way of illustration, then, specific sinners are singled out and their destruction is sure. Like a bird of prey, the scroll was winging its way to land on its victims and purge them. Perhaps this message can be likened to that in Jeremiah 36:2, 3, "Take a scroll

by Lawrence T. Geraty

Lawrence T. Geraty is president of Atlantic Union College and has a doctorate in archaeology and biblical Hebrew from Harvard University.

and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin' (RSV). Cf. Eze. 3:1-11; Rev. 10:8-11.

In the ancient world, individuals and governments had the custom of recording curses on their enemies. This was often done on ceramic vessels, stone sheets, or even on scrolls. When these items were dashed to pieces or destroyed it symbolized the actualization of the curse. In this vision, what God may be saying is that just as they send out futile curses on their enemies so He is sending out effective curses that will in reality accomplish their purpose.

In other words, the word of God in vision 6 is, "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7, RSV).

Why were thieves and perjurers singled out for mention? Can God's "curses" be "blessings in disguise"? How? If that scroll that Zechariah saw had a personal message for you and was headed your way, what would it say?

3. The Woman in the Ephah: Vision 7 (read Zechariah 5:5-11)

"This is the iniquity in all the land" (Zech. 5:6, RSV).

Zechariah was evidently still pondering the previous vision when the angel asked him to look again. This time, in his seventh vision, he saw an ephah, which was a measure, the equivalent of a bushel basket. While he watched, the leaden cover (like a barrel-head), was lifted. And surprise of surprises, there was a woman crouching inside! The angel iden-

tified her as wickedness personified. Sensing an opportunity to regain her freedom, the woman tried to jump out, but the angel pushed her back into the basket and secured its lead cover once more.

This lead cover is called a "stone of lead" in Hebrew. Archaeologists have found that in Bible times weights were actually stones, graduated in weight for use on the balances. Stones, then, were synonymous with weights. So putting the lead weight as a cover over personified wickedness indicated that God's conquest of evil was absolutely sure and effective.

What happened to this "Jane in a box"? As Zechariah watched, two women came forward with wind in their wings (wings like storks, indicating strength) and they lifted the ephah up "between earth and heaven." So wickedness was being transported away efficiently, the high altitude suggesting they were bound for a distant destination. And indeed it was. They were headed east to Shinar, known already in Genesis 11:2 as the plain where the antediluvians attempted to build the Tower of Babel. And ever since it had become a symbol of the spirit of trying to take heaven by force. As one thinks about it, the real essence of wickedness, is the spirit of enterprise carried on apart from God. That was the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who too lived in Shinar (Dan. 1:2).

That Shinar was to be the ephah's permanent home is indicated by the fact that they prepared a home for it there, to set it "down there on its base." The expression reminds one of the ziggurats or temple towers found in that part of the world by archaeologists. The chambers for the divining atop the towers were called "houses."

In any case this vision implies

the permanent removal of the principle of wickedness from among God's people. No matter where wickedness is found "in all the land," there is to be a thorough housecleaning. Wickedness just has to go!

What do Israel and Shinar represent in our time? How does one avoid the spirit of a Nebuchadnezzar, who said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power?" (Dan. 4:30, RSV).

4. The Four Chariots:

Vision 8 (read Zechariah 6:1-8)

"These are going forth to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth" (Zech. 6:5, RSV).

What Zechariah's first vision seems to show being delayed, this last vision seems to picture getting under way. The prophet saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains of bronze. The color of the horses pulling the chariots were in turn red, black, white, and dappled.

The number four may indicate their relation to the four quarters of the world. In other words, God's influence is worldwide. Some have suggested that the two mountains are Mt. Zion and the Mt. of Olives because the valley of judgment known in the Bible as the Valley of Jehosephat is said to lie in between. It is more likely, however, since the mountains were not bronze, that these

mountains were ones of the vision rather than actual. It may be that they are no more than the gates of the enclosure that held the chariots. The colors do not seem to have significance, because verse 5 quoted above has one explanation for all the horses. What is happening here is what was depicted in Psalm 104:4, "who makest the winds thy messengers, fire and flame thy ministers" (RSV).

Notice that the chariots go only north and south (though the RSV suggests west, too, that is not in the original Hebrew). In Palestine all the important roads went either north or south, to Babylonia or Egypt, respectively. West would be into the Mediterranean Sea and east into the great desert.

The vision ends on a strong note of judgment: "Those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country" (Zech. 6:8, RSV). Babylonia, reached by a road to the north, was responsible for the captivity of God's people. God's Spirit has a dual function: bringing judgment on the wicked and salvation for the people of God.

What messengers does God use today to accomplish His purposes in the world? Do God's contemporary "judgments" have a dual purpose? How? If God's "judgment" were to head your way today, how would you fare?

Tuesday, November 7

Things Are Not As They Appear

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Zechariah 5:1-4

"I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. . . . This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." Zechariah 5:1-4.

"Against every evildoer God's law utters condemnation. He may disregard that voice, he may seek to drown its warning, but in vain. It follows him. It makes itself heard. It destroys his peace. If unheeded, it pursues him to the grave. It bears witness against him at the judgment. A quenchless fire, it consumes at last soul and body."¹

The above statement is the only Ellen White comment on our biblical passage this week. The two sins particularly singled out by Zechariah for indictment are stealing and swearing. Regarding stealing, Ellen White bears the following testimony.

1. Stealing is taking advantage of the misfortunes of others.

"'Thou shalt not steal.' Both public and private sins are included in this prohibition. [The eighth commandment] condemns theft and robbery. It demands strict integrity in the minutest details of the affairs of life. It forbids overreaching in trade, and requires the payment of just debts or wages. It declares that every attempt to advantage oneself by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another is registered as fraud in the books of heaven."²

2. The stealing of affections.

"'Thou shalt not steal' was written by the finger of God upon the tables of stone; yet how much underhand stealing of affections is practiced and excused. A deceptive courtship is maintained, private communications are kept up, until the affections of one who is inexperienced, and knows not whereunto these things may grow, are in a measure withdrawn from her parents and placed upon him who shows by the very course he pursues that he is unworthy of her love. The Bible condemns every species of dishonesty, and demands right-doing under all circumstances."³

3. Stealing institutional workers.

"The sanitarium at Battle Creek has been built up under a pressure of difficulties. There have had to be decisive measures taken, contracts signed by those who were engaged as helpers that they would remain a certain num-

by Graham Bingham

Graham Bingham is the editor of COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

ber of years. This has been a positive necessity. After help has been secured, and by considerable painstaking efforts these have become efficient workers, wealthy patients have held out inducements of better wages to secure them as nurses for their own special benefit, at their own homes. And these helpers have often left the sanitarium and gone with them, without taking into consideration the labor that had been put forth to qualify them as efficient workers. This has not been the case in merely one or two instances, but in many cases.

"Then people have come as patrons from other institutions that are not conducted on religious principles, and in a most artful manner have led away the help by promising to give them higher wages. . . .

"Some have become uneasy and dissatisfied because those who have started institutions in other parts of the country have

tried to flatter and induce them to come to their sanitariums, promising to do better by them. . . .

"Now we wish all to look at this matter from a Christian standpoint. . . . There is in the Decalogue a commandment that says, 'Thou shalt not steal.' This commandment covers just such acts as these. Some have stolen the help that others have had the burden of bringing up and training for their own work. Any underhanded scheme, any influence brought to bear to try to secure help that others have engaged and trained, is nothing less than downright stealing."⁴

REACT

1. How would you define stealing? What it is and what it is not?
2. How particular is God today concerning His requirements in the matter of honesty? Why?
3. What would eternity be like if all its inhabitants were as honest as you are at present?

1. *Education*, pp. 144, 145.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 308, 309.

3. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 102.

4. *Counsels on Health*, pp. 282-284.

Wednesday, November 8

The Nine-Gallon Woman

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Zechariah 5:5-11

The vision of the woman in the ephah has long presented interpretive problems. Many have struggled over the symbols of the woman, the ephah, the lead cover, and the two winged women.

When I first read through the vision of the woman and the ephah and saw the word *ephah* I responded like Zechariah and said, "What is it?" (Zech. 5:6, NIV). Not having an angel as did Zechariah, I turned to biblical scholars for help.

The *SDA Bible Dictionary* defines an "ephah" as a "measure for grain" about 22 liters or 2.5 pecks U.S. dry measure.¹ The *International Critical Commentary* states an "ephah" to contain 36.44 liters or about 38.86 American quarts (a little over 9 gallons).² If you can't picture liters, pecks, or American quarts, try picturing a cubic foot. That's how the *Keil-Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* defines the size of an ephah.³

It is obvious that not all scholars agree on the size of an ephah. But most scholars agree that there is a definite problem if you want to try to fit a woman in a container of any of these sizes.

This problem has led some scholars to doubt whether the ephah mentioned in the vision of Zechariah 5:5-11 is really an ephah at all.

In order for the container in the vision to have held a woman it would have had to be larger than standard. C. F. Keil suggests that the ephah is the "shape," and not necessarily the size.⁴ Others propose that the size of the ephah doesn't matter, because they understand the woman in the vision to be wickedness personified.

If an ephah is not a container of the magnitude able to hold a woman, or the woman in the vision is not literal, then why is the ephah used specifically in this vision? The answer is probably found in the ephah's use. The ephah was a measuring standard for grain. In fact, an ephah was the base unit of Hebrew dry measure and originated from an Egyptian unit of similar size. The ephah pictured in this light symbolizes the judgment of Israel. Israel's wickedness is placed in the measuring cup and "sized up."

REACT

1. Can you suggest guidelines for understanding the difficult symbols used in biblical visions?
2. How is forgiving and forgetting of sins related?

1. *SDA Bible Dictionary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979), vol. 8, p. 332.

2. Mitchell, Hinkley G., D.D., et al, *The International Critical Commentary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 172.

3. Keil, C. F., *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, Volume X, Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), p. 283.

4. Keil, C. F., p. 283.

by David S. Stone

David Stone is a freshman at Atlantic Union College at the time of this writing and served on AUC's short-term (summer '88) mission project in the Philippines.

We Would Be Like Jesus

HOW TO

Key Text: 1 Peter 2:21

The lesson theme for this week provides us with a picture of the character of God. We see a willing, forgiving, and giving attitude. This is a comfort to many of us who feel insecure. We find security and hope in a God who accepts and respects us.

The key text for this week (Zech. 7:9, 10) calls us to be like God in attitudes. How we can do this:

1. Accept. Manifest an attitude of acceptance with each person you meet. Accept their weaknesses and strengths and respect them for what they are. All are equally precious in the sight of God.

2. Remember. Recall the way God has treated you and dealt with you, and try to do the same for others. Remember the freedom God has given us. We all have choices to make. Not all of us will choose the same options, and we should remember that there are more than just two.

3. Forgive. When others stumble and make fools of them-

selves or when they consciously go out of their way to hurt us, be prepared to forgive. In the light of the magnitude of the forgiveness extended to us by Christ, can we do anything else? Forgive.

4. Forget. Christ has promised to remove our sins and throw them in the depths of the sea. He doesn't hang onto them and use them as darts to throw back at us. We should consciously make a decision to forget the errors and sins of others.

5. Pray. To form a character like Christ should be our ultimate goal. Make a conscious and deliberate decision each day to manifest the spirit and attitude of Jesus in everything you do.

In time, if we step back and take a look at our lives, we will see that the greatest thing we can do for others is treat them as Jesus would.

REACT

1. What attitude do we have when dealing with "undesirables"? How would taking on the character of Christ change our attitude toward them?

2. How is forgiving and forgetting of sins related?

by David S. Stone

David Stone is a freshman at Atlantic Union College at the time of this writing.

Friday, November 10

Obscurities

OPINION

Key Text: Matthew 13:34, 35

Visions, with their obscure symbolism, impact minimally on twentieth-century minds accustomed to unembellished factual statements. The meaning of some of Zechariah's eight visions is especially elusive. Even the explanations the angel gave the prophet are vague allusions to further symbols.

Why, we might ask, did not the angel forthrightly state that people who steal and lie will face their just deserts? Because what the mind's eye visualizes has a more lasting impact than would a mere abstraction. Christ used parables for the same reason.

In Zechariah's sixth vision an enormous scroll, big enough to fill a small ranch house, flies in through an open door and confronts the thief with the written accusations against him before it completely consumes his house, wooden frame first and finally even the foundation stones. Then it moves to the home of the prevaricator and demolishes it in the same manner. For the ancients whose hope centered on material things rather than a future existence, this was a powerful summons to right living.

In the seventh vision evil in the form of a woman in a barrel is transported to distant Babylonia. The vision seems naively idealistic in that wickedness is removed from Israel to Shinar, the site of the Tower of Babel and a symbol

of Satan's kingdom. The vision graphically provides assurance that righteousness will eventually triumph over evil.

The most obscure vision is the last with chariots hurrying on their appointed missions to various parts of the earth. Although this could be a way of speech Zechariah 6:2 indicates that the first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, the third white horses, and the fourth grisled horses. The grisled horses seemed especially eager to be on their way. The chariots, identified as spirits from the Lord, were dispatched in different directions to accomplish undisclosed tasks.

The flying scroll, the woman in a barrel, the four horse-filled chariots, all reveal the Lord to be all-powerful, fully able to complete His work on the earth. For Zechariah's day the task was rebuilding the Temple amidst strong opposition. For us it is preparing our hearts and the world for the last judgment in the face of ridicule.

Through visions and parables God speaks not only to our logical left brain but also to our perceptive, imaginative right brain. The Bible reaches out to all temperaments, all cultures, and all eras. The tantalizing obscurity of some portions need not discourage the diligent hunter.

REACT

If all Scripture could be comprehended, how would our perception of God be altered?

by Margarita Merriman

Margarita Merriman is professor of music and director of the Honors Core Program at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Lesson 7, November 12-18

The Branch



“ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness’ ” (Jeremiah 23:5, 6, NIV).

Ceremony and Symbol or Here Comes the Bride

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 3:8-10; 6:9-15

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and these witnesses. . . . Do you, Harold, take this woman, Ellen? . . . Do you promise to? . . . You may kiss the bride."

Why all the fuss? The words are not profound. Why spend \$10,000 for a wedding and invite 300 guests to witness an hour's program? Why not be practical and buy furniture and savings bonds? Why take the silver and gold from the returned, exiled people to make a crown? Why bother about thrones and insinias? Why all the fuss?

Ceremony and symbol matter to human beings. All cultures mark events with dramatic ceremony and symbol. Yet biblical symbol, set in an ancient, Middle-Eastern culture, sometimes confounds us. Why did "they" use such odd ceremony "crowns," "thrones," "advisers," "seven eyes"? (The ancients would, of course, have no trouble dealing with our symbols—a man kissing an unveiled woman in front of an audience of men and unveiled women.)

If one accepts the seriousness of ceremony and contemplates the meaning of the symbols, the uncomfortable oddness disappears, replaced by profound reflection.

Add then to ceremony the words, not of a mortal pastor—add the words of God. Then ceremony is spellbinding.

To ceremony, add symbol. Symbols add richness, depth, to ceremony so that, even after the exhilaration of the moment fades, an unforgettable memory, a memorial, remains. Thus God says, "See the stone"—that's easy; I've seen stones before—but this stone has seven eyes—seven! And since God is speaking, seven *holy* eyes. This must be a special stone, a special event. Then God plans to engrave this stone. Now even long after a physical stone is out of sight, the memory of it remains.

Not only would the historical figures remember, but a modern reader will not easily forget seven eyes transfixed on a stone, a stone bearing God's inscription. And modern readers must consider the designation given to Joshua as a symbol for Christ—Branch. Branch—not root or trunk, not sword or shield. Branch—reflection on this one symbol alone could fill hours. What power, what challenge; how much more than a kiss as a seal.

Joshua and those at their original ceremonies may have been inspired and awed, but readers today can be equally, if not more, enriched with the meaning that can come to them through ceremony and symbol.

by Pam Dietrich

Pam Dietrich teaches English at Loma Linda Academy, Loma Linda, California.

Joshua Our Predecessor

LOGOS

Theme: *Christ our all. At the heart of the book of Zechariah, the Branch is presented as the supreme Personality, restoring His people, and functioning as their Advocate, Righteousness, Judge, High Priest, and King.*

1. Joshua as Our Predecessor (read Zechariah 3:7)

Joshua was the first high priest after the captivity. In the vision of this third chapter, we see how Christ has been able to "rebuke" Satan and offer to Joshua His garment of righteousness. Joshua, as the high priest, stands as a symbol of God's people. Since he is a type of God's people, he is our representative. Joshua is restored to divine favor, and after this reinstatement is given a charge, an assignment by God, and a promise if he will conform to God's ways.

If we today will walk in the Lord's ways and keep His words, blessings will come to us, as well. This is similar to a promise given to Solomon after he asked God for wisdom to rule his people (see 1 Kings 3:14). This offer is not made to us because of our heritage or relationship to Abraham, or because we come from some royal bloodline like Solomon. Rather, it comes to us through the Branch, His sacrifice, and our spiritual adoption into the family of God. We receive it by accepting the offer.

2. Beautiful Men and Women (read Zechariah 3:8)

"For they are men wondered at." The Hebrew word for "wondered at," *mopheth*, means conspicuousness, a miracle, or a sign. These men are to be a sign or demonstration of how much God can accomplish when He has a group of people who walk in His ways. *Mopheth* in the Hebrew comes from the root of another word, *yaphah*, which means "bright" or "beautiful." So if we wanted to stretch the analogy a little further, these people of God will be like a brightness, full of beauty, with something recognizable as different in their characters.

What is it about God's people that makes them recognizably different from a good person who is not a Christian?

3. Christ the Branch (read Zechariah 3:8, second half)

"I will bring forth my servant the Branch." The Branch is a symbol of Christ, the Messiah, the One who restores His people and provides them with a righteousness they cannot attain on their own. This symbolism is found in the New Testament where John records Christ's calling Himself the vine—the supporting Branch for His disciples. Christ as support, restores His people, stands up for them, and is judge and high priest. Yet, He also provides the means by which His people can participate with Him in His

by Mike Boyko

Mike Boyko is a dentist and part-time instructor in oral surgery at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

work and bring forth fruit.

Our society prides itself on being individuals and doing our own thing. How do we as Christians reconcile this philosophy with that of being so intimately connected to Christ and His work and relying on Him for direction, strength, and purpose?

4. Repose in Christ (read Zechariah 3:10)

The pastoral scene depicted here is a symbol of the peace and security we can expect with being connected with Christ. It is an emblem of tranquil prosperity, "under the vine and under the fig tree"—a type of the spiritual peace we can experience in the here-and-now and also in the coming kingdom.

In your experience, how do you picture the "spiritual peace" that comes with being united to Christ?

5. Messiah's Tasks (read Zechariah 6:9-15)

These verses depict the work of the Messiah. He is to: a. build the temple (that is, the spiritual house of God), b. have the glory,

c. be priest d. rule, e. have the council of peace.

6. "... Far Off Shall Come ..." Does That Mean Us? (read Zechariah 6:15 and Ephesians 2:19-22)

This chapter in Zechariah and the lesson for the week end with us in mind: the Messiah's acceptance of the Gentiles as His people. The Jewish people failed in their task, leaving God to accomplish His work through the Christian church. Paul, writing to the Ephesians says, "Peace to you who were far off . . . for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one Spirit. Thus you are no longer aliens in a foreign land, but fellow-citizens with God's people, members of God's household. . . . In him the whole building is bonded together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:17-20, NEB). Thus, we, Gentiles, become the "living stones" of the temple of God, chosen by Him and precious.

Is it possible that we, like the Jews, can neglect our calling and be cast off for those who are "far off"? Why?

The World Is Watching

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Isaiah 4:2, 3

The texts for this week offer two main thoughts for Christians today: one focuses on Christ the Branch, the other on the people of God, "men wondered at." It seems as though God through the ages has given us the promise of a Deliverer and a resource and help in trouble. This is the Branch (Christ)—yet Christ requires us to participate and become a partner in His plans. The men and women who heed this call truly do become "wondered at."

"Never is one received into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the enemy. But He who was the hope of Israel then, their defense, their justification and redemption, is the hope of the church today."¹

"God's commandment-keeping people are described by the prophet as 'men wondered at.' We are to be a people distinct from the world. The eyes of the world are upon us, and we are observed by many of whom we have no knowledge. There are those who know something of the doctrines we claim to believe, and they are

noting the effect of our faith upon our characters. They are waiting to see what kind of influence we exert, and how we carry ourselves before a faithless world. The angels of heaven are looking upon us. 'We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men' (1 Cor. 4:9)."²

"Now is reached the complete fulfillment of the words of the Angel: 'Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth My Servant the Branch.' Zechariah 3:8. Christ is revealed as the Redeemer and Deliverer of His people. Now indeed are the remnant 'men wondered at,' as the tears and humiliation of their pilgrimage give place to joy and honor in the presence of God and the Lamb. 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem.' Isaiah 4:2, 3."³

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 585.

2. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 386.

3. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 592.

by Mike Boyko

Mike Boyko is a dentist and part-time instructor in oral surgery at Loma Linda School of Dentistry, Loma Linda, California.

Wednesday, November 15

All Systems Are "Go" in God's Program

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Zechariah 6:9-15

The returned exiles were discouraged. Only sixteen years had elapsed since they had arrived back in Palestine in high spirits. Cyrus, the Persian king, had decreed their release and commissioned the rebuilding of the Temple, even footing the bill (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-5). But stiff Samaritan opposition slowed down the building program till it stopped (Ezra 4:1-5, 24), and the despondent Jews reasoned: "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Haggai 1:2).

Now, under the double prodding of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1), the people resumed the rebuilding enterprise (Haggai 1:14). The Lord's encouraging words rang in their ears: "Thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it" (Zech. 1:16).

As the people struggled to clear away the debris and to erect the Temple, they could not help feeling condemned. The evidence of the ruin caused by the sins of their forefathers was everywhere. But the Lord conveyed to them the assurance of His forgiving grace through the vision of Joshua and the Angel (Zechariah 3). The exchange of the high priest's filthy garments (Joshua,

in this instance, representing the people) for clean priestly clothing convinced the people that God had forgiven and accepted them—and would work in their behalf to restore the nation. Now God would use Joshua in an enacted prophecy further to encourage His people with hope.

The restored nation of Judah was moving into position for her finest hour—the very reason for her existence: to prepare the world for the advent of the Messiah (Gen. 12:3). Jeremiah and Ezekiel had already announced that His advent would occur after the restoration from the captivity (Jer. 23:5, 6; Ezek. 34:23, 24). Daniel's prophecy had actually set the time for His appearing (Dan. 9:24-27). Now Joshua is summoned to role-play another important Messianic message.

Zechariah places upon the head of the seated priest a crown with woven tiers of gold and silver. Facing Joshua, the prophet solemnly proclaimed in the presence of certain pilgrims from Babylon: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH [SPROUT]; . . . He shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6:12, 13).

To designate Joshua, a high priest of the house of Aaron, as

by Frank Holbrook

Frank Holbrook is an associate director in the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference.

a symbol of the Messiah was remarkable! The word *BRANCH*, or *SPROUT*, was a technical term that the Bible writers used to refer to the Messiah, as a scion from the house of David (Jer. 23: 5, 6). For the first time in prophetic history the royal house of David and the priestly house of Aaron were to merge, as it were, in one personage: the Messiah who would be a king-priest (see Ps. 110:1, 4 for emphasis on the King-Priestly role of the Messiah from another perspective). The Messiah would be a King-Priest upon His throne, and twice it is emphasized, *He* would build the temple of the Lord.

The New Testament would later unlock these cryptic phrases

in detail. The Messiah did indeed assume His role as King-Priest upon the throne of God (Heb. 8:1, 2; 1 Cor. 15:24, 25; Rev. 3:21) and reigns over His kingdom of grace from the heavenly sanctuary. It is He who is building the spiritual temple of God's redeemed people (1 Peter 2:5). And "the counsel of peace" (Zech. 6:13) is indeed between God and the Messiah: They plan and work together for the salvation of the human family. All systems are "Go" in God's program!

The returned exiles probably did not grasp all that was involved in the role-play, but the point of the pantomime was clear: Work with a will; prepare the way. A new and wonderful King is coming!

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Your Gift This Quarter Will Make a Difference!

Thursday, November 16

I Am Available

HOW TO

Key Text: I Cor. 12:18-24

If you are like me, you've been through numerous revivals and Weeks of Prayer. It seems that we come out of these experiences with great hope for the future and a resolve to, this time, follow the Lord's leading. I can remember coming home from spiritual retreats and throwing out "questionable" reading materials and the "wrong kinds" of records. One time I came home from a conference only to find that I had no more "questionable" records to throw away, so I threw out a good one (much to my mother's displeasure) as a symbol of what I wanted to do. I wanted to please God and to be a part of His movement.

As Christians we all want to be a part of God's work—be men and women wondered at. We have good intentions, just like my throwing out those records. But it is fruitless and frustrating to attempt to be something we are not. Many Christians do just that, however. They try to work for the Lord in areas where they don't fit. The end result is failure. How can we be happy and fruitful in our efforts of working with the Lord?

1. Be Available

God wants men and women who are available to do His work,

who are willing to do what they are called for, and to stop when the Spirit says "No."

2. Look at Yourself and Analyze Your Abilities

According to a 16-year study of 350,000 individuals, four out of five had jobs that didn't match their abilities. God wants us to use the unique traits He has given each of us in His work. With His help we can discover and confirm these gifts. It takes some introspection, time alone, and talking with others to home in on these qualities the Lord can use. The time and effort spent in their discovery is worth it.

3. Offer Your Gift to God and Let Him Use It

Since God has given each individual unique gifts and abilities, He has a special place to use them. Many of us assume that the most important gifts are visible, such as preaching, teaching, or evangelism. But the gift of encouragement or listening is just as important and is a capacity that the Creator may have put within you to fulfill His purposes. *No gift is too small or unimportant.*

Once we have made ourselves available, discovered our gifts, and offered them to God for His use, the Branch will be able to employ us to build up the church by winning others to the good news of the gospel.

by Mike Boyko

Mike Boyko is a dentist and part-time instructor in oral surgery at the Loma Linda School of Dentistry, Loma Linda, California.

“Men Wondered At”—Us?

OPINION

Key Text: Zechariah 3:8

Christ as the Branch supplies the ability, the timing, and the situations. We know that He could use angels or even rocks, if necessary, to witness and do His work. But He calls us. He calls us not because we are the most able and have a multitude of talents and abilities, but because of our availability and willingness to learn. It is amazing how a simple talent or quality, one that we might consider unimportant such as meekness, can end up being used by God to bring about the greatest good.

Who were the men and women of the Bible that were “wondered at?” Moses was a murderer and self-styled leader of the children of Israel whom God exiled to a Midian wilderness for 40 years to cultivate a spirit of meekness and obedience. David, the adulterer and murderer, had to have God’s prophet speak to him directly to change his ways and humble him. And what about Paul? God had to blind him on the road to Damascus and leave a “thorn” in his flesh. This was done to remind him that what was important was his availability to the call and his willingness to be daily directed in the way the Lord wanted him to proceed. It was Rahab, the harlot, whom God used: her ability to talk fast and her stealth. Can you imagine God quizzing her on her

theology and doctrine prior to her helping His cause; yet she is mentioned in the great list of those who trusted God by faith and served Him. These were all men and women of ability, well trained, with multiple talents, but worthless until surrendered to God. What God needed was not ability, but availability. He needed people with the willingness to work for Him and the willingness to learn what it was God wanted and how He wanted it accomplished.

Now, it may sound simple. In fact, you may say to yourself, “Well, if all God wants is my availability, no problem, He’s got it.” Actually, what He is asking is a lot harder, because along with availability is a willingness to learn—learn?—learn what your talents and abilities are and learn what God’s will is for you. He is asking for a different type of energy from you. Time spent in introspection! Definitely more time spent in the Word and prayer. Now the focus is not on just being busy for the Lord, as Saul was, but being involved in the appropriate area for your abilities as was Paul. You can discover God’s will only by being in tune with Him, and this involves investing time with Him, His word, and His people.

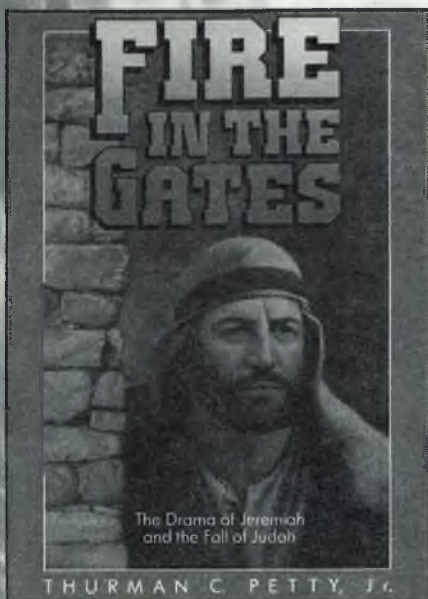
REACT

Suggest ways that make it possible, in a busy schedule, to spend an appropriate amount of time each day in the Word.

by Mike Boyko

Mike Boyko is a dentist and part-time instructor in oral surgery at the Loma Linda University College of Dentistry, Loma Linda, California.

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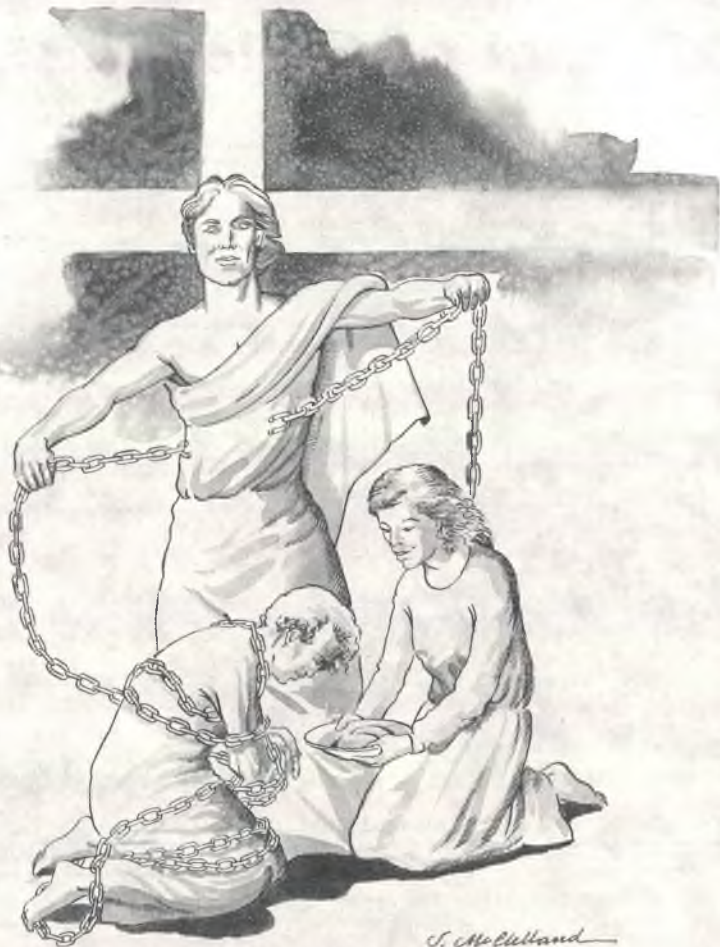
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Lesson 8, November 19-25

Patchwork Religion



“ ‘Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?’ ” (Isaiah 58:6, 7, NIV).

Sunday, November 19

Help, God—I'm Bored

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 7:1-14;
8:16-19

How many times have you walked into prayer meeting, or communion service, or even church service, and wondered just exactly what you were doing there? Maybe never, if you're one of the lucky few who know exactly what they believe, why they believe it, and why they're acting on it. Or, it could be simply that you've done it all your life, it seems the easiest course to follow, and, well, you're an obedient type of person.

Which is easier: to act on teachings or to understand your actions? Can "obedience" without understanding breed boredom, or even contempt?

In Zechariah 7:1-14 and 8:16-19, the question was raised as to whether the priests and prophets of the time should continue their traditional custom of fasting and mourning on certain months. The Lord replied with a question: Were your actions in earnest—did you really wish to come back to Me? Or, did you just do so for yourselves? Then comes redirection from God: Be honest and fair, merciful and kind. He reminded the people that their ancestors re-

sisted this basic message, eventually bringing poverty, desolation, and separation upon themselves. God repeated His peace-bringing directions and promised that, if accepted and taken to heart, they would bring joy, gladness, and festivity, as well as new meaning, to the traditional fasts.

The Jews were paying tribute to the form of religion, but not to its true meaning. It appears they were even devoid of the principles of honesty, fairness, mercy, and kindness. Not surprising—rules are often easy to follow; concepts require thought and conviction for follow-through.

As young adults with a full future to look forward to, the poverty, desolation, and separation of Zechariah's day seem far removed. However, a real problem facing us is apathy—boredom with our religion. One message we can draw from Zechariah is encouragement to truly understand our beliefs, to refocus our motives. This is a broad message. But then, there is no pat answer—or three easy steps—that will solve the problem. Perhaps a little effort on our part, and more focus on the application of the concepts of caring, will bring a clearer understanding of our beliefs, and with it the joy, gladness, and festivity of our religion promised by God.

by Sheila C. Elwin

Sheila Elwin is a public-relations assistant at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

The Real Issue Between Faith and Works

LOGOS

Theme: *True religion goes beyond ritual and outward appearance. In love God leads us to hear His words, obey His will, and experience reformation of life.*

Religious confusion of many kinds could be avoided if believers would only understand the biblical distinction between true and false worship. Many persons, especially within the context of the faith-and-works issue, hold that the difference between true and false religion is measured by the volume of human effort required for salvation by a particular belief system. It is thought that if one is being saved by faith, God does the work, but if one is saved by works, then we are required to work at least a little. Righteousness by faith is often viewed as righteousness without human activity. Whether one thinks this righteousness was accomplished twenty centuries ago at Calvary, or here and now through a let-go-and-let-God relationship, the meaning is the same.

But the Bible disagrees.

Salvation by works as condemned in Scripture is not a question of whether man or God is performing the process. It is a question of whether righteousness remains on the surface or whether it is taken to heart. The Pharisees are a good example of

not taking righteousness to heart: while they tithed seasoning herbs and recited long prayers, they practiced and condoned social injustice (Matt. 23:14, 23). Jesus declared, "You cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity" (Matt. 23:25).¹ They created a façade of purity, while beneath was corruption. In Ellen White's words: "The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ's day was that a mere assent to the truth constituted righteousness."²

Paul spoke to the same problem. To those who held that hearing the law each Sabbath in the synagogue was enough, he wrote, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Rom. 2:13). Elsewhere we read, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). James writes: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24).

Do these passages contradict those Pauline statements which declare that salvation is not by works (Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5)? Certainly not. The difference is between the selfish works of the Pharisees and Judaizers and the sanctified works of born-again believers.

The problem's ultimate solu-

by Kevin D. Paulson

Kevin Paulson holds a Master's degree in theology from Loma Linda University and writes considerably regarding current issues in Adventism.

tion is found once again in the words of Jesus: "First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean" (Matt. 23:26). But contrary to what many believe, the law is involved in this process from start to finish. I fear that many young Adventists who sing as a Scripture-song, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7, KJV), haven't the vaguest notion of what they're really singing. Were you to ask many of them the question, "Does the law convert people?" one can probably assume the vast majority would say No. But isn't this what the Bible says? The law makes us conscious of our need for something better, convicting us of our sins (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24). When we surrender to Christ and ask Him to fill this need, the law in turn is written upon our hearts (Deut. 30:14; Jer. 31:33; Rom. 10:8; 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10). For such persons the law ceases to be an unpleasant spiritual reality need-

ing to be "balanced" by sermons on the love and mercy of Christ. Instead it becomes the shining transcript of our Saviour's loving character, of which David could write: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18).

Many Adventists have come to use the word *relationship* to describe the Christian's walk with the Lord. There is nothing wrong with this word, but it is almost never used by Inspiration, and I think for good reason. For too many of us the word *relationship* denotes accommodation rather than transformation, a negotiated settlement rather than unconditional surrender. But unlike so many human relationships, people and God never "agree to disagree" within the context of Christian experience. While we actively cooperate in carrying out God's directions, never do we give any directions ourselves. So long as our Christianity remains genuine, God remains in total command.

1. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical texts are from the Revised Standard Version.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 309.

Channels, Not Reservoirs

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: Zechariah 7:5-10;
James 2:14-17

One theme that runs through biblical religion is that belief has meaning only when it results in action. In Zechariah, the Lord points out that the Jews were fasting, mourning, and feasting to themselves, not to Him. James wrote on the same theme in the first century A.D. Ellen White continues that theme in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

"Widows and invalids are in the church to prove a blessing to the church. They are a part of the means which God has chosen to develop the true character of Christ's professed followers and to call into exercise the precious traits of character manifested by our compassionate Redeemer. . . .

"But I was shown that a most solemn duty rests upon the church to have an especial care for the destitute widows, orphans, and invalids."¹

"Divine wisdom has appointed, in the plan of salvation, the law of action and reaction, making the work of beneficence, in all its branches, twice blessed. He that gives to the needy blesses others, and is blessed himself in a still greater degree. God could have reached His object in saving sinners without the aid of man; but

He knew that man could not be happy without acting a part in the great work in which he would be cultivating self-denial and benevolence.

"That man might not lose the blessed results of benevolence, our Redeemer formed the plan of enlisting him as His co-worker. By a chain of circumstances which would call forth his charities, He bestows upon man the best means of cultivating benevolence and keeps him habitually giving to help the poor and to advance His cause. He sends His poor as the representatives of Himself. By their necessities a ruined world are drawing forth from us talents of means and of influence to present to them the truth, of which they are in perishing need. And as we heed these calls by labor and by acts of benevolence we are assimilated to the image of Him who for our sakes became poor. In bestowing we bless others, and thus accumulate true riches."²

REACT

Many governments have programs funded by taxes to assist the poor. To what extent then does paying taxes fulfill our religious obligation to these people? Should Seventh-day Adventist churches become active in providing shelters for the homeless? What about runaway children and drug addicts?

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 273, 274.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 382, 383.

by Bruce Wilcox

Bruce Wilcox is a professor of biochemistry at the Loma Linda University Graduate School of Medicine and the School of Dentistry.

Wednesday, November 22

A Description, Not Prescription

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Zechariah 8:16, 17;
John 8:32; Matthew 7:12

It is all too easy to take admonitions such as the one in Zechariah 8 to speak the truth to each other as simply good advice or as prescriptions that we may accept or reject as we see fit. But they are not. Instead they are descriptions of the essential nature of God's created beings and the relationships between them. Speaking the truth to each other is an indispensable behavior for happy, prosperous, and safe families, churches, communities, and nations.

It seems to me that most of the time we fail to tell the truth, that is, we tell lies, to get out of some kind of scrape. For example, lying is about the only defense school-boys have against teachers. Remember that Tom Sawyer lied because it was the custom and he stuck to it out of principle. Slaves, prisoners, and citizens of repressive totalitarian states will lie to protect themselves.

It is worthwhile to think carefully about lying and the results of lying in our relationships.

In the first place, the arguments in favor of lying almost always come from people who want to tell lies. Some famous advocates of lying are Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Hitler. These men wanted to exert power, and believed themselves above the rules that lesser, ordinary people

live by. The arguments that justify lying seldom come from persons who are being lied to. Think about it. How often would you choose to have your president, your boss, your teacher, or your dean lie to you? Even liars don't like to be lied to.

Lying leads to a lowering of confidence. If I find out that you have lied to me, and sooner or later I will, it will be a long time before I trust you again. Whatever you say, there will always be a nagging doubt about your truthfulness. This happens in interpersonal relationships, as well as in community and national relationships. When high government officials stoutly denied that the United States was trading arms for hostages, didn't it occur to you that, since the Government had lied to us during the Nixon era, it was just possible that our country was, in fact, trying to trade arms for hostages?

Lying leads to more lies. The liar has to erect an ever more elaborate structure of untruth to protect the plausibility of the first lie.

Lying is a way of arrogantly using power over another person. And it is quite impossible to enter into a loving relationship from a position of power and arrogance.

REACT

Isn't it sometimes more loving to withhold the truth from a sick child or a dying person? Were Christians in the Nazi-occupied countries justified in lying to protect their Jewish friends?

by Bruce Wilcox

Bruce Wilcox is a professor of biochemistry at the Loma Linda University Graduate School of Medicine and the School of Dentistry.

How to Make God Happy

HOW TO

Key Text: Zechariah 7:9; 8:13 (NIV)

Pagan religions are obsessed with making the “gods” happy. Divinities are seen as capricious beings whose temperamental wrath at pitiful human creatures must be averted through various appeasement rituals: kill the pig, sacrifice the chicken, sprinkle the ashes, burn the incense, light the candle, fast correctly, give an offering, pray fervently. Come to think of it, are Christians that much different? The quest to make God happy on the part of Christians may not be quite as overt as those who follow pagan deities, yet many Christians burn the incense, light a candle, fast conscientiously, give an offering, and pray fervently in an effort to gain God’s favor. So how does one “make God happy”? This week’s scripture provides the blue print.

1. Administer true justice.

Perhaps nowhere else in the Bible is there such a strong call for individual Christian activism. In the time of Zechariah and the previous history of Israel, it was the religious leaders who adminis-

tered justice. But today this responsibility lies in the hands of our political officials. It is a God-given directive that we ensure that these officials fulfill their duties with integrity. We cannot remain aloof if these officials thwart justice to their own means.

2. Show mercy and compassion. To ignore the needs of the poor and afflicted, is perhaps the greatest sin. Nothing is more God-like than to “share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer [homeless] with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him” (Isa. 58:7, NIV). To be merciful is to be like God.

3. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong. It takes courage to be responsible. We can learn some lessons in courage from such men as Lech Walesa, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and others who have struggled for justice. It takes discipline to remember the needs of the poor and to give them aid. How much easier it is to ignore their needs and to go about the routine of our lives. But we are called to be different. We are called to be like God by His grace, and this makes Him happy.

by Evert McDowell

Evert McDowell is a news writer in the public-relations department of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International.

Friday, November 24

I Have Some Questions

OPINION

Key Text: John 8:32

My first question is triggered by a suggestion found in the **Introduction**. The last paragraph indicates that for today's young adult, poverty, desolation, and separation seem far removed and that maybe we should see Zechariah's challenge in the light of boredom with religion. My question is "Should today's young adult Christian be far removed from poverty, desolation, and separation?" I think not! Even if our own circumstances are quite comfortable, the call of Scripture to be involved in some way up to our elbows in the tragic conditions of the lives of others is clear.

In the **Logos** article we find the suggestion that the law converts people. This gives rise to my second question, "How much do we want to claim that the primary power for conversion is the law?" I know that is the wording of Psalm 19:7 as we have it in our translations. However, if we compare scripture with scripture it is difficult to ascribe conversion to the law. There is no question that it plays a crucial role in the whole process. But to say it converts and then leave it at that risks all sorts of impersonal, destructive perspectives on religion that already has more than enough of these negatives. I agree that we

have become too sloppy with our emphasis on relationships and the warm fuzzies of Christianity. But let's not swing the pendulum so far the other way that Christ as the center of it all is minimized. The only factor that will bring transformation is relationship with our Lord.

I'm fascinated with the focus of the **Evidence** article. Given the whole theme of this lesson I wonder if lying and deception are the root causes of a religious experience that is limited only to ritual and outward appearance. My last question is, "If we were to focus our attention on being absolutely truthful, would our religion begin to take on some wonderful elements of real life?" The whole idea is an interesting thought, especially considering that the fall centers on a clever deception. Just imagine the implications if all of us were suddenly to become honest with ourselves. It would call for remarkable levels of self-awareness. Think of what might happen if our journey with Jesus brought us to new depths of self-understanding and hence new depths of confession and from there to new depths of forgiveness, healing, and love! I get goose bumps just thinking of the wonderful transformation that would take place in our individual lives, our fellowship, and our life of service and ministry to the world.

by W. Clarence Schilt

W. Clarence Schilt is one of the chaplains to students at Loma Linda University and an associate pastor at the Loma Linda University Church.

Lesson 9, November 26—December 2

Standing on the Promises



J. McWhittand

“This is what the Lord says: ‘I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called The City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called The Holy Mountain’ ” (Zechariah 8:3, NIV).

Sunday, November 26

From Fasting to Feasting

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 8:1-23

When my grandfather, the late W. B. Ochs, baptized me back in 1955, there were tears in both our eyes. I had received Jesus as Saviour and believed that through baptism my sins would be washed away. I believed Jesus would come into my life and that I would never sin again. But it wasn't long before I realized that I was the same person I had been before baptism. The miraculous change in my nature did not come as I expected. Between the ages of 12 and 21 I was under conviction that I was a lost sinner.

At Columbia Union College I discovered the good news of salvation. Elder Felix Lorenz told us of the marvelous exchange that occurs when we receive Jesus as Saviour (see 2 Cor. 5:21)—Jesus bears the punishment for our sins on Calvary, and, as far as our past record is concerned, accounts His perfect obedience to the law to us. Then God, looking at the believer who is in Christ, sees only Christ's perfection. While studying the book of Romans, I discovered a text that literally broke my heart, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8, RSV). As the meaning of this text penetrated my soul, I found myself one evening behind the girl's dorm at a place we called "Hilltop." Often on Friday nights the men from Morri-

son Hall would gather there for prayer and singing. On this particular evening, I was alone.

"Do You really love me?" I asked God. "Me—with all of my faults and failures?" Though God did not answer audibly, I felt for the first time in my life that His love for me was real, and that He had forgiven my sins and accepted me as His child. Not long after that I made the decision to serve the Lord as a gospel minister, for I could not get Matthew 28:18-20 out of my mind. In all of life's vicissitudes, I have never forgotten that evening when God's love became real to me. I realized that Jesus Christ had died for me, even me. I was overwhelmed with the thought that it was nothing I had done that mattered, but rather that God through Christ had worked out my salvation.

While preparing this introduction, I was impressed that the most striking feature of Zechariah is that the sovereign God takes things into His own hands. Despite Israel's failures, and their questions, He pledged to be their God in truth and in righteousness. He overwhelms them with glorious promises of support, and on that basis invites them to "let your hands be strong" (verses 9, 13). Zechariah 8 is really an exciting chapter for those who may be hanging on by their fingernails. Can He help you? If you are willing, He will turn all of your mournful fasting into joyful feasts of celebration (Zech. 8:19).

by Larry Christoffel

Larry Christoffel is a chaplain at Loma Linda University and an associate pastor for the Campus Hill Church.

Messages of Hope

LOGOS

Theme: *God pledges His Word. He undertakes to fulfill His promises in our behalf. Our hope is built on His solid word that what sin has destroyed He will restore for those who place their trust in Him.*

Cyrus' decree to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem went out in 538/537 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-5). In the spring of 537/536 B.C. 42,360 Jewish exiles under Zerubbabel's leadership returned to Judah (Ezra 1:5—2:70), fulfilling the 70 years of Jeremiah's predicted captivity (see Jer. 25:11; 29:10; Dan. 1:1-4; 2 Chron. 36:5-7, 22, 23). By that fall they were offering sacrifices on the rebuilt altar (Ezra 3:1-3). By the next spring they had laid the foundation of the new Temple (Ezra 3:10-13). Because of opposition from their Samaritan neighbors, the returned exiles ceased working on the Temple until the year 520/519 B.C., when Darius issued another decree that the work should go forward financed by the royal treasury (Ezra 4:4, 5, 24). That same year God raised up Haggai and Zechariah as prophets to lead the people in the work of reconstruction (Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1, 7). God gave Zechariah a series of visions assuring the people that hindrances to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom would be swept away (Zech. 1:7—6:15).

Two years later (518/517 B.C.),

Sharezer and Regemmelech and their men, representing the city of Bethel, brought a question for the priests and prophets at Jerusalem to answer. "Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?" (Zech. 7:3-5; see also 8:19). Fasting commemorated tragic events of the past, such as the destruction and burning of the city of Jerusalem in the fifth month of Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year (2 Kings 25:8, 9). Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar's appointed ruler was murdered in the seventh month of the same year (2 Kings 25:23-26). The fast of the "tenth month" commemorated the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in Zedekiah's ninth year as King (2 Kings 25:1). Incidentally, the beginning of Zechariah's ministry (520/519 B.C.) was on the seventieth year after the siege of Jerusalem (589/588 B.C.; see Zech 1:12), and the request regarding "fasting" (518/517 B.C.) came on the seventieth year after the city of Jerusalem was destroyed (587/586 B.C.; see Zech 7:5).

God addresses the question of fasting in 12 revelations, each of which is introduced by a "Thus saith the Lord" or a similar expression. The Lord first questions their motives for fasting (Zech. 7:4-7), then reminds them that it was their disobedience that resulted in the captivity (Zech. 7:8-14). By contrast, Zechariah 8 offers a tenfold, or complete, assurance that He is with them in the Restoration.

by Larry Christoffel

Larry Christoffel is a chaplain at Loma Linda University and an associate pastor for the Campus Hill Church.

1. "I am jealous for Jerusalem . . . with great wrath" (Zech. 8:1, 2). "He who touches you touches the apple of his eye" (Zech. 2:8, RSV). The Amplified Bible says, "I am jealous for her with great wrath [against her enemies]" (Zech. 2:8). Jeremiah's prophecy of Judah's 70-year captivity included the promise to punish Babylon (Jer. 25:12; see Zech. 1:14, 15, 18-21; Deut. 30:7).

2. "Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city" (Zech. 8:3, RSV). Judah, formerly unfaithful and cursed, is now faithful and blessed. The glory of the Hebrew nation was Jerusalem, and the crown jewel of the city was the glorious Temple. Yet only God's presence, the "Shekinah Glory," sanctifies the Temple. God pledges His presence in Zion.

3. Jerusalem will be a place of safety for all (Zech. 8:4, 5). All will feel at home in Jerusalem, from the elderly who sit at the side of the streets to the boys and girls playing in them. Both the captivity and the reconstruction must have been traumatic for the children and the elderly. God promised a city where the old and the young will dwell in security.

4. "Should it also be marvelous in my sight?" (Zech. 8:6, RSV). In the past, the enemies of God's people had successfully blocked progress on the building of the Temple. The people have been largely discouraged, needing reassurance that God would see this project through to completion. Responsibility for success is removed from people and assumed by God Himself.

5. "I will save my people from the east country and from the west country" (Zech. 8:7, 8, RSV). A relatively small group had returned

from exile compared with those who had been scattered. Note that the promise, "they shall be my people and I will be their God" is the same as the one guaranteed under the new covenant (Jer. 31:33). God pledges Himself in faithfulness and righteousness (Zech. 8:8).

6. "Let your hands be strong" (Zech. 8:9, 13). Already God has turned the plight of His people, for there are now paying jobs, and protection from harassing enemies (Zech. 8:10, 11; Ezra 4:4, 5). The Lord pledges that even though the land was under God's curse, nature will yield abundant crops (Zech. 8:12; Lev. 26:14-16). Once a byword among the surrounding nations, His people will be a blessing (Zech. 8:13; Gen. 12:1-3; Deut. 29:24-28).

7. "Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace, do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath (Zech. 8:14-17, RSV)." God is calling the people to renew the covenant with Him, even as He did with Israel just before they went into the Promised Land. He cautions them that they must hold up their part of the agreement. Note that God's covenant is always "conditional" (see Lev. 26:3-6; Deuteronomy 28; 30:8-10; Jer. 18:7-10; 24:9; Mic. 5:7; Eze. 33:13).

8. "The fast of the fourth month, . . . the fifth, . . . the seventh, . . . the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts" (Zech. 8:18, RSV). Here is the answer to the question that the representatives from Bethel were to take back. The fast on each of the months mentioned reminded them of the events associated with captivity. But now

God offers to turn their sorrow into joy!

9. *Through the witness of the Jews, many who not yet know the Lord will come to Jerusalem and seek Him (Zech. 8:20-22).* Here is the blessing promised to the nations through Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Effective witness is the by-product of a faith relationship with God.

10. *"Ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'."* (Zech. 8:23, RSV). As the glory of the Temple and Jerusalem is the presence of God, even so it

is the believer's personal relationship with God that lures others to God's kingdom (see Ps. 51:1-19; Isa. 2:2, 3). Zechariah 2 envisions an unwalled city, and Zechariah 9:10, a kingdom of God extending from sea to sea. Jerusalem was to be the hub of evangelistic activity leading to the establishment of a universal kingdom of God.

The Temple was completed in the year 515 B.C. (Ezra 6:15), and Jerusalem's city wall, in 444 B.C., about seventy years later (Ezra 7:1-28; Nehemiah 2:1, 9; 6:15).

How were these ten promises fulfilled to the Jewish nation?

How do these ten promises apply to Christians today?

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Tuesday, November 28

Israel's Failure and Our Opportunity

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Zechariah 8:3, 7, 8

"The promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional."¹ "Today, as never before, the dissemination of Bible truth by means of a consecrated church is bringing to the sons of men the benefits foreshadowed centuries ago in the promise to Abraham and to all Israel—to God's church on earth in every age—I will bless thee, . . . and thou shalt be a blessing.' Genesis 12:2.

"This promise of blessing should have met fulfillment in large measure during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God's design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ, even as today the way is preparing for His second coming. At the end of the years of humiliating exile, God graciously gave to His people Israel, through Zechariah, the assurance: ' . . . I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.' Zechariah 8:3, 7, 8.

"These promises were conditional on obedience. The sins that had characterized the Israelites prior to the captivity, were not to be repeated. 'Execute true judgment,' the Lord exhorted those

who were engaged in rebuilding; 'and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother.' 'Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.' (Zechariah 7:9, 10; 8:16.)²

"Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah."³

"That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today."⁴

"God's church on earth was as verily in captivity during this long period of relentless persecution, as were the children of Israel held captive in Babylon during the period of the exile.

In every part of the earth, men and women are responding to the Heaven-sent message which John the revelator prophesied would be proclaimed prior to the second coming of Christ: 'Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come.' Revelation 14:7."⁵

1. Ellen G. White Manuscript 4, 1883.

2. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 703, 704.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 712.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 713.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 714.

by Larry Christoffel

Larry Christoffel is a chaplain at Loma Linda University and an associate pastor for the Campus Hill Church.

What Might Have Been

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Jeremiah 18:7-10

“Of all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these, ‘It might have been.’” Through Daniel, God declared that the Jewish nation would have 490 years to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah (Dan. 9:24, 25). Zechariah 8 (see also Isaiah 2:1-5; Micah 4:1-5) paints a glorious future for Israel. A future that never materialized.

Jerusalem would be established as the mountain of the Lord, a safe place for young and old. Captives from the east and west would be gathered there. God would pour out covenant blessings in the form of economic prosperity and productive harvests. Israel would become a blessing to the world rather than a curse. Because God was with the Jewish people, people around the world would seek them out. This was God’s plan for Israel from the beginning (see Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:5, 6; Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14; 30:1-8).

Seventh-day Adventists, together with many other Christians, have turned to Scripture and found a satisfying system for interpreting Bible prophecy based on two sound principles.

One principle that helps us understand Bible prophecy is “conditionalism” (see Jer. 18:7-10). Had the Jewish nation been faithful to its calling and prepared the world for Christ’s first coming, then

Zechariah’s predictions would have taken place. Had the Jews of Christ’s day received Him as Messiah, it still would have been possible for them to be God’s chosen people and Jerusalem the center of worship. Though Jesus had warned of Jerusalem’s destruction, that woe might have been averted, as was the destruction of Nineveh through the repentance of that city under the preaching of Jonah.

A second principle guiding us in our understanding of prophecy is that of allowing later inspired writers to interpret previous revelation. The New Testament reinterprets all of the covenant prophecies in terms of God’s new-covenant people—the church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles who receive Jesus Christ by faith (Gal. 3:29). The Christian’s citizenship is in the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22). Christians should never forget, however, that just as covenant “conditionalism” applied to Israel of old, so our right to eternal life is based on believing and accepting the gospel.

REACT

For further study on “conditionalism,” see “The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 25-38 and “Conditionality in Biblical Prophecy With Particular Reference to Apocalyptic” by William G. Johnson in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, pp. 259-287.

by Larry Christoffel

Larry Christoffel is a chaplain at Loma Linda University and an associate pastor for the Campus Hill Church.

Thursday, November 30

Pure Religion

HOW TO

Key Text: Micah 6:8

Religious people assume that what God wants from them is ritual. "Should we continue fasting in remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem?" was the question posed by representatives from Bethel. The Lord immediately questioned their motives (Zechariah 7:2-6).

"Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other" (Zech. 7:9, 10, NIV). Failure to fulfill these covenantal obligations led to the Babylonian captivity. "These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the Lord" (Zech. 8:16, 17, NIV). With total unanimity the Old Testament prophets insisted that cultic ceremonies were not pleasing to God. What God wanted was the simple practice of humility, justice, and mercy (see Isa. 1:12-17; 58:1-10; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8).

Seventh-day Adventists are sometimes content with following rituals, such as observing the Sabbath certain ways, attending church, tithing, following a vegetarian diet, etc. We review

the doctrines that make us distinct from others and pride ourselves that we, as God's remnant, are on our way to the kingdom (see Luke 18:10-14). In the spirit of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ set priorities straight when He declared, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Matt. 23:23, 24, NIV). The apostles Paul, John, and Peter in their inspired counsel always insisted on the practice of practical godliness—treating others as God through Christ has treated you (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12, 13; 1 John 4:11, 12; 1 Peter 1:18-22). James put it this way: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27, NIV).

How much of our lives are spent treating those around us mercifully and fairly, and helping those in genuine need?

REACT

What changes do you think are necessary in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in order for us to make an impact on the world?

by Larry Christoffel

Larry Christoffel is a chaplain at Loma Linda University and an associate pastor for the Campus Hill Church.

A Church at the Crossroads

OPINION

Key Text: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Striking parallels abound between Judah of Zechariah's day and the church, today. God commissioned Israel to prepare the world for Christ's first coming; we are to prepare the world for Christ's second coming. Israel invited the world to worship the true God at the temple in Jerusalem; we point the world to the heavenly city and temple where Jesus Christ mediates for believing sinners (Heb. 8:1, 2). Unsympathetic neighbors oppressed Israel's efforts; our efforts are opposed by those who would enforce "creature worship" upon the entire world (Revelation 12-14).

God's people in Zechariah's day failed to develop a genuine faith relationship with Him. They tended to be preoccupied with mere forms of religion, such as fasting and attending religious festivals. They forgot that genuine spirituality is rooted in God's love and manifested in the way one treats others. The church today is threatened with: antinomianism, which denies the necessity for the fruitage of obedience; liberalism and perfectionism that deny the ongoing need for the merits of the Saviour; institutionalism, which professionally meets the spiritual, physical, and social needs of society. We have spent our time debating doctrinal issues, even

the doctrine of salvation, while neglecting the elements of personal devotion and practical godliness (see Rev. 3:14-22).

In order for the Old Testament believers to experience the fulfillment of God's promises, they had to grasp them with sincere faith. God was willing, but, though He provided everything necessary for their success, He could not use them in their halfhearted, double-minded commitment. Similarly, in order to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which results in the going forth of a message that will enlighten the world with its glory, the church must take God's provisions of salvation and the accompanying responsibilities seriously.

In Zechariah 8, God overwhelmed a defeated, discouraged, and questioning people with a revelation of His sovereignty, His goodness, His mercy, and His plans for them. In light of the victory that He alone could bring, He admonished them to "Let your hands be strong" (verses 9, 13). The only hope for the church that is to proclaim the gospel to the world (Matt. 24:13), is that she become preoccupied with Jesus Christ and His righteousness (John 17:3).

REACT

What do you think is the greatest danger threatening the church? What in your estimation is the church's greatest strength?

by Larry Christoffel

Larry Christoffel is a chaplain at Loma Linda University and an associate pastor for the Campus Hill Church.



Why Are We Missionaries ?

We have had the privilege and opportunity to help train young people in Peru, Mexico, and Chile. It is our special joy to see our former students in positions of leadership in the church.

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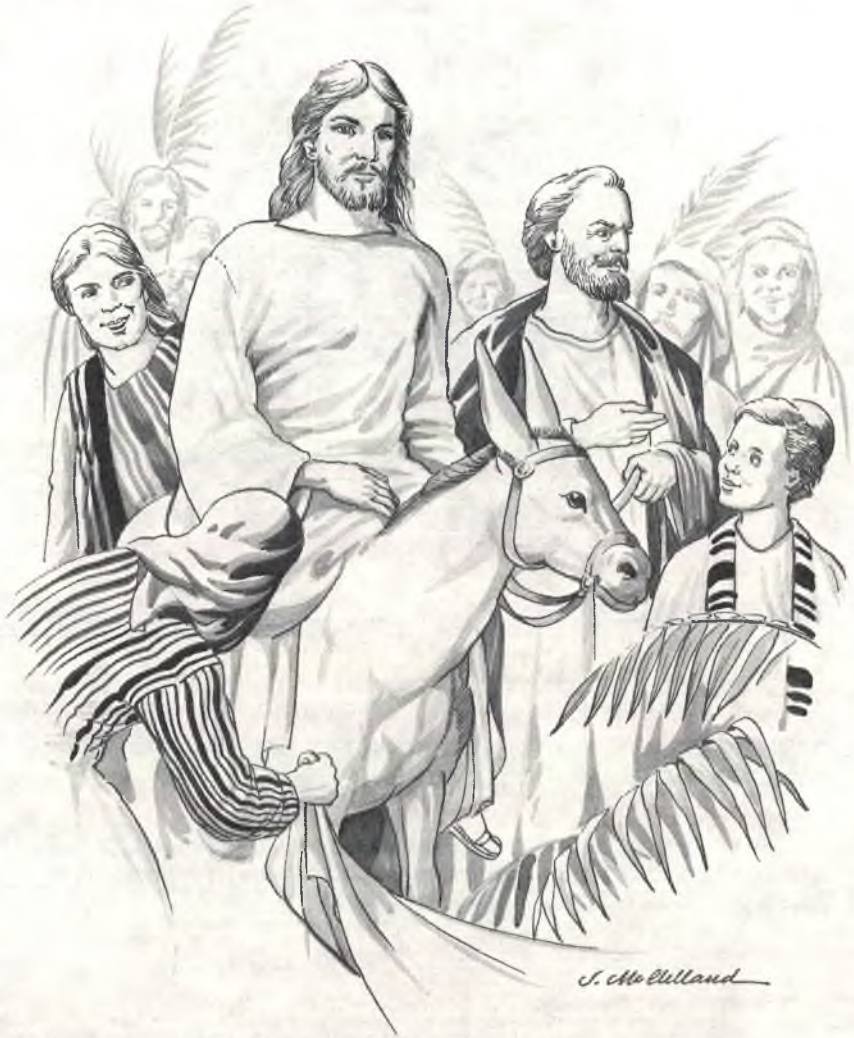
We thought we were giving up a great deal when we first accepted the call to mission service, but blessings received have been far greater than any sacrifice.

Allen, Judith, Brad and Lorice Jamison

Missionaries Still Needed: The General Conference Secretariat currently has calls for over one hundred inter-division workers, primarily in health care, teaching and administrative professions. Applicants must have specific academic qualifications, successful experience, and good recommendations. For details, write to Secretariat Information Service, 6840 Eastern Avenue, N. W., Washington, D.C. 20012

Lesson 10, December 3-9

Free at Last



“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9, NIV).

Sunday, December 3

Impressions of Prophecy

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 9:1-17

The bearded man squinted against the afternoon sun as he reshuffled the parchment scrolls under his arm. Steadily he walked along the winding road toward home. The streets were busy—crowded. People were flocking to the capital city for the holy days of celebration.

Suddenly a shout and a distant moving multitude caught the man's attention. Again his eyes strained to catch the significance of the unusually large throng of people entering the city. Yes, they were singing, shouting, dancing, celebrating. He slowed his steps as he sensed an electrical charge of anticipation and ecstasy sweeping through the crowd. A look of concern crossed the man's face as he thought of the uncontrolled madness of group actions. His expression deepened as he caught sight of the crowd's focus—a man riding a donkey following the Jewish custom of royal entry. The triumphant crowd drew closer, and the onlooking gentleman stopped still as he recognized the man on the donkey. In astonishment, he realized this was the carpenter-preacher; the Person who had rejected and shunned all outward form of kingship, display, and honor; the Person who declared that His king-

dom was not of this world. The scholar stroked his beard as his mind raced. "A king on the colt of a donkey"—where had he read that? Ah, yes! The old prophet Zechariah had foretold such an event. He remembered well the prophecies described—the ones that had come to pass and the ones of which Israel was so anxiously awaiting fulfillment. Truly the riches of the antagonistic seaport city of Tyre had crumbled and become dust. Sidon and the cities of the Philistines were ruined and empty. Each prophecy, one by one, had been fulfilled. Yet this next one—how could this seemingly unaggressive layman break the bondage of Israel and "extend His rule from sea to sea" (Zechariah 9:10)? What did this donkey-man know of warhorses, battle bows, and warrior's swords? As he turned away in disbelief, his eyes met those of the Man on the colt.

The eyes, a mix of fire and compassion, seemed to speak, "My fellow scholar, you who know the covenant of Abraham so well, I now bring you the fulfillment of that covenant. You are now a prisoner of circumstances, but I will free you with hope and deliverance. No, I cannot bring peace to an entire nation who is not abiding by My covenant, yet I can bring peace to your life. And truly those who are now oppressed will one day shine as jewels."

by Linda Page

Linda Page is a registered nurse working with the heart team at the Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.

Servant and King

LOGOS

Theme: *Christ brings peace. At the heart of Zechariah 9, which deals largely with war and destruction, we receive a beautiful picture of humility, peace, and strength in the person of Jesus Christ. He is depicted as riding on an ass into Jerusalem to establish His spiritual kingdom in the hearts of people. This is a prelude to His second coming when He will ride on the clouds of heaven to establish His kingdom of glory over all the earth.*

In Zechariah 9 Christ is often pictured in His two advents as both Servant and King. The key messianic verse is: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Behold your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey" (9:9).

About 500 years after this prophetic utterance Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem according to Jewish royal custom. "Never before had the world seen such a triumphal procession. It was not like that of the earth's famous conquerors. No train of mourning captives, as trophies of kingly valor, made a feature of that scene. But about the Saviour were the glorious trophies of His labors of love for sinful man. There were the captives whom He had rescued from Satan's power, praising God for their deliverance. The blind whom

He had restored to sight were leading the way. The dumb whose tongues He had loosed shouted the loudest hosannas. The cripples whom He had healed bounded with joy, and were the most active in breaking the palm branches and waving them before the Saviour. Widows and orphans were exalting the name of Jesus for His works of mercy to them. The lepers whom He had cleansed spread their untainted garments in His path, and hailed Him as the King of glory. Those whom His voice had awakened from the sleep of death were in that throng. Lazarus, whose body had seen corruption in the grave, but who now rejoiced in the strength of glorious manhood, led the beast on which the Saviour rode."¹

In this oracle of Zechariah there are two messages: The first is described by Zechariah as "the burden of the word of the Lord upon the land of Hadrach" and the surrounding nations of Israel. These will receive their rightful judgment of the Lord in due time. At the same time Zechariah prophesies the preservation of Jerusalem in the days of Syria, Phoenicia, and Philistia—states which would all fall under the judgment of God (9:1-9).

This prophecy was fulfilled with the coming of Alexander the Great. He captured Damascus and Sidon, and after a siege of seven months, Tyre itself. He also marched against Gaza and razed it to the ground. Alexander, however, never attacked Jerusalem, in spite of the

by Bjorgvin Snorrason

Bjorgvin Snorrason is working on a Ph.D. at Andrews University. He has been a teacher and pastor in Norway and Iceland.

fact that he passed the city more than once in the course of his campaigns. This partly fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy concerning the preservation of the city of Jerusalem for the coming of the true King. "Zechariah's messages, setting forth Jerusalem's glorious future, were conditional (Zech 6:15). Because of the failure of the Jews, when they returned from captivity, to meet the spiritual conditions upon which their prosperity was based, the prophecies were not fulfilled in their original intent. However, certain features will be fulfilled in the Christian church . . ."²

The prophecy now proceeds to describe the program of the Messiah: "Because of the blood of the

covenant I will set your prisoners free" (9:11). Here the Father is speaking to His Son and declaring that His future sacrifice on the cross will be accepted as a ransom for any prisoner of sin. The lowly Servant comes riding on a donkey thus speaking the peace of the gospel to all nations. It is on the basis of the gospel alone that Christ's "dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (9:10). The prophecy is therefore no longer national in its scope, but universal extending even to the new earth (Rev. 21, 22), when Christ's dominion will be 'from sea to sea.' "The whole world is embraced in the contract of the great plan of redemption."³

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 572.

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1085.

3. Ellen G. White Manuscript 65, 1912.

Tuesday, December 5

Tears of Warning

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Luke 19:41-44

Zechariah 9 prophetically describes Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It also provides a portrayal of the blessings awaiting Israel at that time if they would "diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Zech. 6:15).

"Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah thus foretold the coming of the King to Israel. This prophecy is now to be fulfilled. He who has so long refused royal honors now comes to Jerusalem as the promised heir to David's throne."¹

When the joyful procession reached the brow of the hill overlooking Jerusalem Jesus suddenly stopped. "Jesus raised His hand, —that had so often blessed the sick and suffering,—and waving it toward the doomed city, in broken utterances of grief exclaimed: 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!—' Here the Saviour paused, and left unsaid what might have been the condition of Jerusalem had she accepted the help that God desired to give her—the gift of His beloved Son. If Jerusalem had known what it was her privilege to know, and had heeded the light which Heaven had sent her, she

might have stood forth in the pride of prosperity, the queen of kingdoms, free in the strength of her God-given power. . . . She would have been the world's diadem of glory."²

"The tears which Christ shed upon Olivet as He stood overlooking the chosen city were not for Jerusalem alone. In the fate of Jerusalem He beheld the destruction of the world. . . .

"The day is nearing its close. The period of mercy and privilege is well-nigh ended. The clouds of vengeance are gathering. The rejecters of God's grace are about to be involved in swift and irretrievable ruin.

"Yet the world is asleep. The people know not the time of their visitation.

"In this crisis, where is the church to be found? Are its members meeting the claims of God? Are they fulfilling His commission, and representing His character to the world? Are they urging upon the attention of their fellow men the last merciful message of warning?"³

"The Lord says, 'Shall I not visit these things?' Jer. 5:9. Because they failed of fulfilling God's purpose, the children of Israel were set aside, and God's call was extended to other peoples. If these too prove unfaithful, will they not in like manner be rejected?"⁴

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 569.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 576, 577.

3. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 302, 303.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

by Cami Dale

Cami Dale, R.N., is an M. A. student at the School of Public Health, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Wednesday, December 6

Keeping Promises

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Zechariah 9:8

Frustrated by the halted work of the Temple, Zechariah seeks to bring courage to the returned exiles. This takes the form of judgments pronounced upon the surrounding nations (Zechariah 9). Verses 1-8 speak about judgment while verses 9-17 speak of the coming King, restoration of a mighty kingdom, and the ensuing peace. Many have taken Zechariah 9 and pointed to Christ's triumphal entry (Luke 19:28-38) claiming that as the fulfillment of the prophecy. But before such an interpretation is made, it would be best to look at the text through the eyes of a contemporary returned Jewish exile.

Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron were Philistine cities that were controlled by the Persian Empire in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. Tyre was a port city that made a lucrative living through trade. Once having a healthy relationship with Solomon during his building of the First Temple (1 Kings 9:11), Tyre later broke with Israel when the opportunity came to sell Hebrew slaves to Greece when the Northern Kingdom was sacked by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. For this, Tyre was eventually conquered by Alexander the Great. The seven verses had been fulfilled, the land was now ripe for the coming King.

Verse 8 presents the promise "Never again will an oppressor

overrun my people." Peace for the land was to be brought about by a peaceful king riding on a donkey. This restoration of peace was not through the modern philosophy "Peace through Strength." Human weapons are abolished. Horses and chariots were the tanks of the ancient world and God's people were not to trust in these weapons (Ps. 20:7). The people themselves become the weapon (Zech. 9:13). Ephraim (the ten northern tribes) who once fought with Judah will be restored and work in harmony together with Judah just as bow and arrow harmonize. The Lord Himself will fight the battle (verse 14), while Israel and Judah use slingshots, a reference back to David's trust in God as he slew the giant Goliath.

The result of this peace is that everyone will be able to eat of the fruit of their labors. The fruit of the vine refers to the new kingdom of peace (Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:10; 8:12; Luke 22:18).

Imagine yourself now a Jew in Christ's time reading the prophet Zechariah. From your understanding of this prophecy you would expect the new King to deliver the Jewish nation out of the hands of the Romans. But this was not to be achieved through human means of warfare—but through a spiritual birth into the kingdom of God. The reaction of the Jews to Jesus' triumphal entry suggests that they were thinking of this text. When Jesus died on the cross it was obvious they had made a mistake. The question

by Tom Glatts

Tom Glatts is an associate pastor at the Thousand Oaks Church, Thousand Oaks, California.

must be asked, "What went wrong?" "Why didn't Jesus usher in a temporal kingdom?"

The answer to such questions lies in Zechariah 8:16, 17. The people of the New Jerusalem would love truth, give sound judgment, and never plot evil. The new kingdom was dependent on a righteous people. Daniel warned that they had a short time to put an end to their sin (9:24). Judah was to prepare herself for her coming King. Much to Christ's grief, He discovered that the religious leaders and people did not accept Him as King.

According to Zechariah, God's original plan was for Jerusalem to be a city of peace. The Messiah would bring peace to the world making Zion the seat of His government. Through the example of a righteous people, the world would come to the Jews

seeking to know God (8:23). The world would be taken without a violent act. Love would be the greatest weapon of all.

Because of Judah's unfaithfulness, the kingdom was taken from her and given to another people (Matt. 21:43; Rom. 11:17). The promises to literal Israel now apply to spiritual Israel. The kingdom of peace is now within our hearts.

REACT

If Jesus sets up His kingdom through nonviolence, how does this affect our attitude toward the taking up of arms? What about viewing violence on television for entertainment?

If the promises to the Jews were conditional, how about the promises to the remnant church?

How does the cross fit into Zechariah's prophecy?

Thursday, December 7

Proclaiming Peace From a Donkey

HOW TO

Key Text: Zechariah 9:1-17

Reading through the book of Zechariah we see many examples of the Lord fighting against nations with great power. Chapter 9 is no exception since it deals largely with war and destruction. It describes the King and the Lord in two comings. These two comings are so different that they cannot be the same. The second time He comes like lightning, the sounding of a trumpet, marching in the storms, like you would expect of a king.

But His first coming is different. Here we see a gentle King riding on the foal of a donkey proclaiming peace to the nations. How can anybody riding on a slow donkey be powerful enough to rule from sea to sea?

Many world leaders think that in order to have power and influence they must have a strong military force. They believe this will make other nations respect them and secure peace for their countries. If we want to be successful, our human nature tends to strive for what is thought to indicate strength. We want to

be rich, educated, talented, popular, intelligent, beautiful. These status symbols are constantly changing. For example, smoking used to be the "in" thing, now the opposite is true. Once we loved to have others working for us so that we could relax, now we *work out* to look strong and healthy.

Jesus gave us an impressive lesson by coming as a King riding on a donkey. He reminds us in a beautiful way that true Christian success is obtained "not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6, NIV).

There are many apparent paradoxes in the life and teachings of Jesus: blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are persecuted, insulted. He told us to be servants and slaves if we wanted to be great and first. The King riding on a donkey is an example of this kind of paradox. When Jesus came as a baby his kingdom looked weak, but it has proven to be the most powerful kingdom the world has ever seen. But its strength will not be fully revealed until the second coming when Jesus will "march in the storms" and we "will sparkle in His land like jewels in a crown."

by Snorri Olafsson

Snorri Olafsson, M.D., is from Iceland. At the time of writing he was taking postgraduate training in gastroenterology and preventive medicine at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

Prisoners of Hope

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Peter 3:15

Nelson Mandela is a prisoner of hope. He has spent more than twenty years in a South African prison. Many times he has been offered release but has refused to accept the conditions. Those who hate his cause, and those who disagree with his methods, have no doubts about the power of his stance. His unyielding commitment continues to serve as a rallying point for millions.

Hoping. Hanging in there. Keeping faith. It may not seem like much, but such a private passion in one person's life has meant more to the cause of South African blacks than anything else. It is the lifeblood of any cause that struggles against opposition, adversity, or indifference.

Causes may stay alive by virtue of hope alone. Hope—nothing else—may even be the basis for personal survival.

Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist, endured the horrors of German concentration camps during the Second World War. He was a prisoner of war, but as it turned out, even more a prisoner of hope.

One day, at the beginning of March, 1945, a fellow prisoner related to Frankl a dream he had had in February. In the dream a voice told the prisoner that any question he might have would be

answered. He asked when the war would be over for him. The voice in the dream turned to a whisper and revealed the date as March 30.

As March 30 neared, it became more and more evident that freedom was not to be that soon. On March 29, Frankl's fellow prisoner became ill with a high fever. The following day, which was to have been his day of release, he became delirious and lost consciousness. March 31, he was dead. When this prisoner's hope was crushed, so was he.

"Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope," Zechariah announced to people of his day. They would not make it without hope. No one ever did. No one ever will.

Early Seventh-day Adventists also declared themselves to be "prisoners of hope." When health and educational institutions strayed from the ideal, Ellen White wrote that "they are prisoners of hope." Some day, somehow, some prisoner of hope might be the instrument to "bring them back to their upright position of distinction from the world."* Do not count yourself out in this respect.

The tone in Zechariah 9 is unmistakable. Hope will prevail. God's purpose will not be held hostage to opposition, apostasy, or indifference.

* *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 145.

by Sigve Tonstad

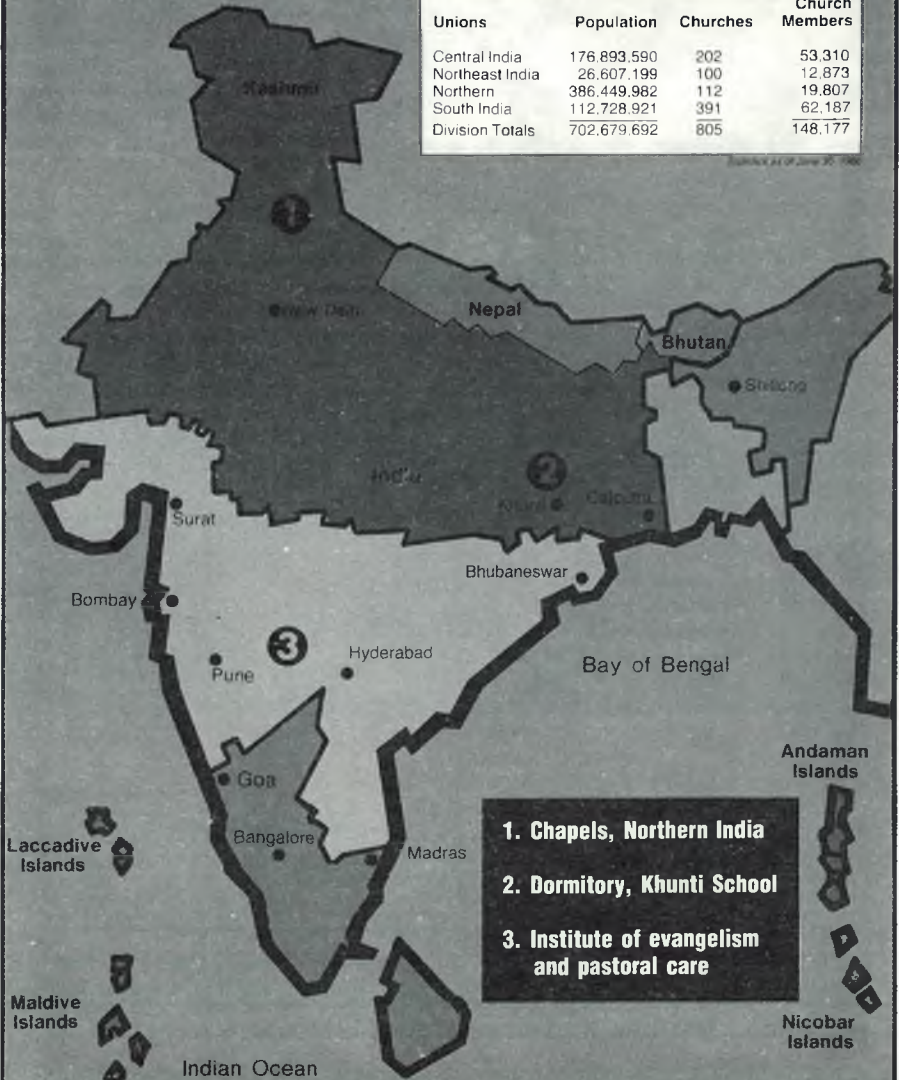
Sigve Tonstad completed his studies at Loma Linda in 1979 and returned to his native country of Norway where he worked as an evangelist and physician for 6 years. He is currently completing a residency in Internal Medicine at Loma Linda University.

Your Gift This Quarter Will Make a Difference!

SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION

Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members
Central India	176,893,590	202	53,310
Northeast India	26,607,199	100	12,873
Northern	386,449,982	112	19,807
South India	112,728,921	391	62,187
Division Totals	702,679,692	805	148,177

Statistics as of June 30, 1988



Lesson 11, December 10-16

The Good Shepherd



“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young” (Isaiah 40:11, NIV).

Sunday, December 10

What Leader Do You Follow?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 10 and 11

We are familiar with the analogy of Christ the Good Shepherd, the One who protects, guides, and unswervingly cares for His flock. After visiting a sheep farm near my home and observing how the owner and caretaker had difficulty in getting the flock to follow, I am convinced that being a good shepherd is a special calling.

Fortunately, we can depend on our heavenly Good Shepherd to do His job. We are the sheep, the dumb followers who need to be guided and protected. Often we do not make the decision to follow the Leader who would best take care of us.

Consider now the different types of followers and leaders. Are you a dumb sheep who follows anyone who sounds or looks good? Do you follow someone whose criticisms of the status quo support your own pet peeves? Or do you follow someone through whom you will receive prestige by being associated with them?

There are also several types of leaders. First consider the autocratic leader, the one who gives orders, never listens, controls his followers, and considers others unimportant. People who follow this type of leader don't like to make

decisions for themselves, are afraid to think on their own, usually have a poor self-image, and often adopt an attitude of hostility or egocentricity.

The second type of leader is the laissez-faire, "Whatever-will-be-will-be" type. This leader often talks a lot about what should or should not be, but shows little or no action. He makes no plans, and does little to help the people he is supposedly leading. Followers of this type of leader seem to be caught up by the whims of another person but really don't want to get anything done, or they may be so self-motivated that they could be the leader themselves!

Finally there is the democratic leader. This person cares about his followers and about how they feel and what they think. He will listen, encourage, give direction, is knowledgeable, sorts out conflicts, and encourages cooperation. Followers of this type of leader care about "the flock," its members, and its goals. They like to see progress but not at the expense of others. They think for themselves, feel free to ask questions, and generally have a good self-image.

Our Good Shepherd is clearly a democratic leader and we, as His flock, are cared for by Him. It is not His credibility that is in question, but ours.

by Caroline Evahnenko

Caroline Evahnenko is director of guidance counseling at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.

Monday, December 11

The Dividing Line

LOGOS

Theme: *Christ the triumphant Shepherd; Jesus Christ, the good and true Shepherd, greatly desires to lead all the sheep of His flock—protecting, keeping, and sustaining. But the evil and false shepherds mislead many—abusing them and causing them utter destruction. Yet the good and true Shepherd will ultimately triumph in restoring and making the faithful remnant of the flock strong in Him.*

1. A Message of Triumph (read Zechariah 14:9-11)

Chapters 10 and 11 of Zechariah would seem at first glance to contradict one another. Chapter 10 is filled with messages of hope and prosperity, whereas chapter 11 speaks of the "flock doomed to slaughter" (Zech. 11:4, NASB). When seen within context of the overall message of Zechariah, however, chapters 10 and 11 combine to illustrate God's method of restoring His remnant from apostasy and exile to loyalty and reunion.

2. The Blind Leading the Blind (read Zechariah 10:1, 2)

In Zechariah 10 God's people are characterized as sheep wandering aimlessly without a shepherd to guide and protect them. As a result they are afflicted and in grave danger. For sheep it is a serious thing to wander away from the protection

of the shepherd. Many fierce predators lurk in waiting for stray sheep. This metaphor represents well the children of God. We too are in grave peril when we wander blindly away from the protection of the Father. Outside the realm of His truth there are false shepherds who artfully speak half truths and sugar coat sin in such a way that evil soon appears good.

Zechariah, in response to the deceptive leadership of false shepherds, challenges the people to "ask rain from the Lord at the time of spring rain. . . . And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man" (Zech. 10:1, NASB). One of the gods of the Canaanite religion so prevalent around Judah was Baal, who was symbolized by fire and lightning. He was the storm god and the god of fertility. Thus the growth of crops for the spring harvest was regarded as the work of Baal by many heathen worshippers. Baal worship epitomized false religions and Baal himself was the Lord of all false shepherds. Zechariah is challenging the people to put Yahweh to the test by asking of Him the same kinds of miracles that Baal was supposed to perform. Intelligent and testing questions, when directed to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, will always reveal truth, and this is the first step in God's method of restoring His people.

As we face the 1990's is it possible that we, like Judah of

by Stephen Little

Stephen Little is a senior theology major at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.

old, are being misled by false shepherds?

If so, what kinds of questions should we be asking to identify truth from error?

3. The Healing Oil of Compassion (read Zechariah 10:6)

Even though Judah as a flock wandered from God and suffered exile and persecution, Yahweh still promises them His love. As in Psalm 23 where the Good Shepherd anoints the wounded brow with oil, so Yahweh in Zechariah is pictured as anointing His flock with the healing oil of compassion. Compassion, applied as a healing balm, has a marvelous restorative quality, and for the Jews it was the promise of God's restoration of the nation, which restored their hope and faith. Yahweh in return expected the Jews to extend this same kindness to the heathen nations around them. It is amazing how far a little kindness can go. It is the key to the door of every heart. If we, as a church, ever hope to find the world at our doorstep we too must learn how to extend the healing gifts of kindness and compassion.

How can we, in practical ways, anoint others with the healing oil of compassion?

4. Let Us Rejoice (read Zechariah 10:7)

Once delivered from their foes, the flock of Judah is pictured celebrating their good fortune and rejoicing in the Lord. There is a foreshadowing here of the celebration we will enjoy in the earth made new. God's deliverance, however, is not limited to future events but should be experienced daily in a personal abiding relationship with Christ.

5. Not Always Good Times (read Zechariah 10:8-12)

While good times are a wonderful part of God's redemptive work in our lives, hardships, too, play a vital role. In Zechariah 10:9, the people are pictured remembering God while scattered in far countries. It is a sad commentary on human nature that we so often forget God until something bad happens. Equally sad though, is our tendency to equate good times and happy feelings as the only blessings of God.

It is difficult for children to comprehend a father's love while he is spanking them. And it is difficult for us to perceive the love of the Heavenly Father while He is correcting us. But as a father's discipline is intended for the child's well-being, so too is God's correction intended for our redemption.

Do temptation and trial mean we are far away from God? Why or why not?

6. A Shepherd Who Will Not Seek the Perishing (read Zechariah 11:6, 16)

While chapter 10 illustrates many promises of God's love and protection resulting in the eventual calling out of His remnant, chapter 11 serves as a warning that a time will come when a false remnant will also be called out by a false shepherd.

A dividing line was then, and is today being drawn, so that eventually there will be only two groups left in the world—those who worship Yahweh and those who don't. When that day comes there will no longer be any questions concerning the characters of God and Satan. God's people will fully reflect His love. "From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."^{*}

^{*}The Great Controversy, p. 678.

Tuesday, December 12

The Good Shepherd Is Not a Good Theory

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Zechariah 10:2, 6

It is a puzzle why sheep who know the Good Shepherd become lost, but they do. Why?

"In all ages, philosophers and teachers have been presenting to the world theories by which to satisfy the soul's need. . . . Millions of human beings are bound down under false religions, in the bondage of slavish fear, of stolid indifference, toiling like beasts of burden, bereft of hope or joy or aspiration here, and with only a dull fear of the hereafter."¹

"They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood."² Wooden idols, attractive as they may be, are just that: wooden idols. So with human theories: they are carved by humans for the glory of their human creators. They do not warm the heart. But the image of the Good Shepherd conveys a more powerful picture of God's character than do any number of theological theories.

"Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name."³

"I have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, countered your temptations. I

know your tears; I have also wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touch no responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live."⁴

We may have been raised "properly," but not lovingly by those who fail to model what the Divine desires. As a result, we pass on the same problems to the next generation. Where will the bad line be broken and the past yield to the Person—to the Good Shepherd, who still calls and longs for the lost sheep to hear, to remember, and to return? To remember what?

"It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him."⁵

REACT

Imagine your best friend and your best theory. Which has been more fulfilling?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.

2. Hosea 4:12, NIV.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 479.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 483.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 480.

by Caesar Nawalkowski

Caesar Nawalkowski is a chemistry teacher at Parkview Adventist Academy, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.

Wednesday, December 13

Prophet Plays Shepherd

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Zechariah 11:4-17

The "shepherd" motif is a common one in Scripture. Kings and leaders are often compared to shepherds, sometimes good ones (David in Eze. 37:24), sometimes bad (invaders in Jer. 23:2). Several scriptures liken God Himself to a shepherd (Gen. 49:24; Ps. 23; Isa. 40:11). Most of the "shepherd" references are meaningful and easily understood.

But in Zechariah 11 we have a strange and difficult passage, in which God commands His prophet to hire himself out as a shepherd, taking charge of a miserable and ill-treated flock of sheep destined for the slaughter-house. With the zeal of a reformer he fires three incompetent shepherds, but quickly encounters opposition. Convinced that good leadership is unwelcome in a corrupt trade, the prophet resigns his job, demonstrating his disgust by ceremoniously breaking his two staffs. For his wages he receives thirty shekels of silver, which God commands him to throw to the temple potter. Later, God again commissions the prophet, this time as a "worthless shepherd" (verse 15, RSV) who abuses the flock to the point of its destruction.

Each action of Zechariah was symbolic—for example his breaking the two staffs. The shepherd always carried a rod and a staff. The rod was at least partly a pro-

TECTIVE device, used to ward off attacks from wild animals. Breaking the rod signified the removal of God's protection of Israel from attack by surrounding nations. The shepherd's staff on the other hand was an instrument used in the care and management of sheep. It aided in keeping the flock together. Breaking it symbolized the continued separation of Judah from God.

The prophet's act of throwing his wages to the temple potter was also significant. The Hebrew word for potter can also refer to the melting and molding of metal, a process which was part of the Temple operation in those days. The shepherd's wages, thirty pieces of silver, would produce only enough molten silver to make a small figurine.

The shepherd allegory of Zechariah 11 contrasts sharply with Ezekiel 34. Ezekiel depicts God ultimately saving the sheep from evil shepherds who cause the flock to be torn and scattered. In Zechariah, God delivers the sheep into the control of a shepherd who will cruelly abuse and desolate them. The difference between the two allegories may illustrate the conditional aspect of prophecy. Ironically Israel may ultimately have exchanged their Shepherd for something as worthless as a silver figurine.

REACT:

How does God deal with evil "shepherds" today?

by Keith Clouten

Keith Clouten is the library director at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.

Choosing a Shepherd

HOW TO

Key Text: Zechariah 10:2

When we speak of the Good Shepherd, the picture that often comes to mind is the one of Christ standing with His staff in one hand, a small lamb in the other; and a ewe by His side, gazing up at Him. It is a serene picture evoking calm and trust. Christ's work as our Good Shepherd is slightly more complicated.

A shepherd's work involves building a relationship with his sheep. He spends countless hours with them, talking to them until they recognize every inflection of his voice; understand every movement of his hands. Moving around in their midst he associates with them, touches them, soothes them, until he has their complete trust.

Christ laid the ground work for His role as Shepherd in a few short years here on earth. He spent countless hours with His flock—talking to them, teaching them, living with them, but they never really learned to recognize His signals. He moved around in their midst, touching, soothing, healing, but they never really put their trust in Him. Does this mean, then, that Christ's reign as a Good Shepherd was a failure? Or were there factors involved that the usual shepherd/sheep relationship doesn't encounter?

1. Sheep, both four-legged and two-legged, must respond to the

shepherd's commands. The outcome of choosing to disregard the signals is the same—danger, perhaps death. The difference, of course, is that we as humans have the intelligence to reason through the issue—why is He commanding this? What is the outcome if I choose to ignore this command? To choose to willfully break a commandment or ignore a church standard is to disregard a signal—the outcome could be as subtle as the loss of the relationship the Shepherd longs to have with us, or as obvious as dismembership from the church.

2. To choose to ignore basic health laws is to disregard a signal—the outcome may be swift or long in coming, but it will be sure.

3. To choose to skip our morning or evening devotions, worship services, private or public times with the Shepherd, is to disregard a signal—the outcome may never be obvious to onlookers, but if we are honest enough to listen to our inner selves we will know where we stand. We do the choosing as to how much time (and what quality of time) we will spend with the Shepherd, who the Shepherd is going to be, and whether or not we will obey His commands.

Our choices will have a profound impact on our lifestyle and destiny. Our choosing to follow or not to follow Christ's leading will not affect His role as the Triumphant Shepherd. But will our choice affect us?

by Bernice Leavitt

Bernice Leavitt is the secretary-treasurer of College Heights Adventist Junior Academy, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.

Friday, December 15

The Fat and the Perishing

OPINION

Key Text: Zechariah 11:15

In the crises of rebuilding the Temple God asserts Himself; I will strengthen, I will bring back, I will answer, I will gather, I will bring them home! Yet how did God work? Through Zerubbabel, Joshua, and other men and women.

We also are the men and women God works through. Annie Dillard voices this idea in *Holy the Firm*: "There is no one to send, nor a clean hand, nor a pure heart on the face of the earth, but only us, a generation comforting ourselves with the notion that we have come at an awkward time. . . . But there is no one but us. There never has been."* We are the voice, the feet, the eyes, the hands, the heart of the Good Shepherd on earth.

How do we as shepherds respond when confronted with need—or sufficiency? Are the promiscuous or substance abusers within our institution or church cared for, or do we hope they will leave quickly to avoid tarnishing our reputation? Are those maimed by divorce tenderly carried, or ostracized? And how is it for the single, hungering for fellowship and acceptance as responsible members in our church?

Other members have needs too. When I lead in a Sabbath School class do I feed the class

with a well-prepared study of the Word, or harangue them on the importance of Sabbath School attendance?

Most disheartening is the encounter with a shepherd who "devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs" (Zech. 11:16, RSV). The bad shepherd is not only negligent, he or she is positively destructive! How do I react when some members of the flock challenge the peace and safety of our 27 fundamental beliefs? When assailed by the demands of love, do we deflect them by branding the thinker as liberal or conservative. Maturity knows the risk involved in going beyond our fundamental beliefs to reach out with great love. The greatness of the Good Shepherd is that He takes us with our needs, welcomes our questions, and beckons our growth. When I sense the Good Shepherd, it is—I think—in the accepting word of a peer when I am wrong, the time taken by a professor to listen to my dreams, the pastor who acknowledges that there is no glib answer to my question.

Will the aged remember my touch? Have I healed or hurt the wounded? Have I learned from one with more knowledge than I, or labeled him or her to protect my own deficiency?

Does the shadow that follows me reveal the form of the Good Shepherd?

*Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), pp. 56, 57.

by Lynden and Lissa Hawes

Lynden and Lissa Hawes are both pre-ministry students at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.

Lesson 12, December 17-23

The Fountain Deep and Wide



“ ‘On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity’ ” (Zechariah 13:1, NIV).

Sunday, December 17

The Shepherd Knows

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 9:11; 11:12, 13; 12:10; 13:1, 6, 7.

Through the millenniums God has revealed to us much about Himself. He teaches us through nature and life experiences. But the greatest revelation of Himself was through the life of Jesus. Yet even still there are many mysteries about God. It is not that God has withheld anything from us. Rather it is our limited capacity to grasp the infinite that causes our lack. "All that man needs to know or *can* know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son."* God has shared with us all that He possibly can and all that is necessary for our salvation.

One of the many great mysteries about Jesus is an understanding of the multiple ways He simultaneously meets our needs. Knowing that most people think best in pictures, God has given us a variety of pictures from everyday life. Jesus is at the same time pictured as the Lamb and the Shepherd. He is at the same time the sacrifice and the priest offering the sacrifice. At the very moment when He is being crucified He cries out, "Father, forgive them." He is the great physician

healing our open wounds and simultaneously He is the fountain filled with blood that never ceases to flow. Throughout Scripture we find these contrasting pictures of Jesus. It is as if He were both sides of a coin. He is the Alpha and the Omega. It is apparent that it is essential for us to grasp the marvelous truth that Jesus is all in all. There is nothing we can possibly need that He is not capable of understanding, being, and providing.

Our lesson for this week concentrates on Christ, the smitten Shepherd. This simultaneous overlapping of roles is wondrously beautiful. Would not the perfect shepherd be one that felt hunger, thirst, and pain exactly like his sheep? This shepherd would never care for his sheep from a background of educated guesswork. This shepherd would care because he knew. He was there. Jesus knows. He was there. "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18, NIV).

**Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 286.

by Ian A. Bothwell

Ian Bothwell is chairman of the education department at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

God's Faithful Forbearance

LOGOS

Theme: *Your hope is in the Good Shepherd. Christ, the Good Shepherd, loves His flock infinitely. In His incarnation He became one with us. How good it is to have a Shepherd who understands your weaknesses and struggles. Your greatest happiness now and eternally is in following where He leads.*

1. The Covenant (read Zechariah 9:11)

In chapters one to eight we see Zechariah (520 B.C.) trying to motivate and encourage the Jews to continue their work of rebuilding the Temple. He apparently was successful since we read in Ezra 6:15 that the Temple was completed "in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king."

By the time we come to chapter nine, the Temple has been completed (515 B.C.) and worship restored. Yet we see Zechariah continuing to encourage the Jews. Why? It seems that all the promises of chapter eight had not been realized by the Jews (see Zechariah 8:5, 20-23). In fact, the Jews were still "vassals of a foreign lord . . . the heathen had not come flocking to Jerusalem, eager to embrace the Jewish religion; the temple was not enriched by the gifts of distant nations; their country suffered much from the passage of alien armies . . . they had no king; the family of David had fallen into utter insignificance."—*The*

Pulpit Commentary, p. iii.

To summarize, things were not going well for the Jews. All of their hopes for a glorious nation seemed to be in a holding pattern. So God sent Zechariah with a new message.

First Zechariah prophesies the destruction of Israel's enemies. How God would "take away her [Tyre's] possessions" and how "Gaza will lose her king and Ashkelon will be deserted" (Zech. 9:4, 5, NIV). Then he talks of the coming Messiah who will free them from the "waterless pit" [dungeons] (Zech. 9:11, NIV) and give them peace—all because of the covenant He made with Israel long ago (Ex. 24:4-8).

God had made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:4-7), Isaac (Gen. 26:3, 4), Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15), and Israel (Ex. 24:7). Although Israel broke this covenant many times (Ex. 32:1; Num. 14:1-4; Deut. 1:26; 8:12), whenever Israel returned to Him, God restored them to Himself (Deut. 30:1-10; Josh. 24:25; Hos. 14:1-9). "If in the land of their captivity, they sought the Lord, he would be found of them."—*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, p. 1445.

How would you react to someone who broke a promise to you? How does God react to our broken promises?

2. Thirty Pieces of Silver

In Zechariah 11:8 the good shepherd removes the evil shepherds who are leading the

by Dennis Yoshioka

Dennis Yoshioka is a senior theology student at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

flock to slaughter. These evil shepherds are not interested in the welfare of their flock but only in the money that could be made by exploiting them (verse 5). But the flock's reaction to the work of the good shepherd is puzzling, for not only were they ungrateful, they also ended up detesting the good shepherd (verse 8). And when it came time to settle accounts, they added insult to injury by giving him the price of a slave, thirty pieces of silver.

The good shepherd asks, "If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear" (Zech. 11:12).

Jesus, as our Good Shepherd, also asks us to pay Him a price. The price He asks is our love.

Our love has been and always will be the only price Jesus will ever ask of us. "They withheld that which He sought as His only reward, their love."—Jamieson, *A Commentary: Critical Practical and Explanatory*, p. 872.

What could we possibly give to God that He does not give to us first?

3. "Whom They Have Pierced" (read Zechariah 12:10)

Because Jesus died so long ago at the hands of the Jews it is so easy to divorce ourselves from His crucifixion. After all, we didn't cry out for His death, nor did we pound nails into His hands. But when you think about it, Jesus didn't die because of the Jews. He died because of **OUR** sins (John 1:29).

Yes, you and I *were* at Calvary. Maybe not physically, but we *were* there. The Roman soldiers and the Jews are not the only ones responsible for Christ's crucifixion. We are also guilty of the deed. Because *our* sins nailed Jesus to the cross.

But when we acknowledge our part in His death, confess our sins, and look to the One "whom they have pierced" we receive the

blessing Zechariah 13:1 promises.

4. "A Fountain Opened" (read Zechariah 13:1)

Imagine a sweltering summer day when the air itself seems to be smothering you. When your slightest movement brings beads of sweat pouring down your face and chest. Now imagine how refreshing a fountain of cool water drenching your entire body would feel. Imagine the relief!

When we repent and ask God to cleanse us from sin, He simply pours out His mercy on us like a fountain. His mercy doesn't trickle down reluctantly, but flows out in great abundance.

Yahweh is the "fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13), a fountain of cleansing blood (1 John 1:7), a well of salvation (Isa. 12:3). When God opens His fountain of mercy, everyone desiring to be cleansed can jump in. It doesn't cost anything. It isn't hard to do. The only thing that's stopping you is you.

5. "Strike the Shepherd" (read Zechariah 13:7, NIV)

Jesus identifies Himself as the Shepherd to be stricken (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27). "He came unto his own [creation], and his own [people] received him not" (John 1:11). Everything in creation recognized and gave praise to Jesus—Creator. Everything, that is, except the people He created.

When Jesus was born the angels in Heaven couldn't restrain themselves from singing His praises (Luke 2:13, 14). All of nature obeyed His every command (Mark 4:37-39; Matt. 21:19). All creation gave Him His due, all except humanity.

Jesus made a covenant with us and we broke it. Jesus came down to save us and we crucified Him. Jesus died to give us grace and we pierced Him. Jesus took us into His heart and we deserted Him.

Tuesday, December 19

Saviour: Substitute and Strengthener

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Zechariah 13:1, 6

The perfect life Jesus gave for us, and the cleansed life He gives to us, are two equally important sides of salvation. Ellen White shows no confusion in her understanding of the balance that exists in these two aspects of salvation. She understood Christ's role in dying for us.

"The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin."¹

"Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law."²

She understood Christ's cleansing role with the same clarity.

"None need fail of attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of

Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ's character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through co-operation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God's assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory."³

She saw Christ's role as substitute and strengthener so closely allied that she speaks of them in the same breath when describing the meaning of the cross.

"His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ."⁴

REACT

Am I living under the shadow of the mistakes and sins of yesterday because I am unable to accept Christ's forgiveness?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 531.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

by Nicholas Patrick Miller

Nicholas Miller is a theology major/pre-law student at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Wednesday, December 20

The Fountain of Forgiveness

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Zechariah 13:1

In the Spring of 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon landed in Florida in search of the fountain of youth. The waters of the fountain, according to Indian lore, preserved life and renewed vigor. Ponce de Leon never found it, and people have since stopped searching.

The imagery of the fountain used in Zechariah 13:1 indicates the cleansing powers of another kind of water. God is the fountain, the source of cleansing. And the implication of the flowing fountain is that God's cleansing is continuous. Peter C. Craigie, in volume 2 of *Twelve Prophets* says that the image suggests a fountain of hope. "To a city in mourning for a crime it has committed, there comes new a message of hope. Within the city, a fountain would be established whose perpetually flowing waters would cleanse the citizens from sin."*

In Zechariah, the Jews, having recently returned from exile, were permitted by Cyrus the Great in 539 B.C. to rebuild their Temple. The work was halted because of problems caused by the Samaritans. Having been discouraged by their setback, the Jews become lazy and uninterested in their project. Zechariah's words of hope encourage the people to commence work again and they begin

with new interest.

The promise of the fountain is found in the second part of Zechariah. The book is divided into two parts: the first eight chapters are historical while the last six are apocalyptic. The second of the two sections is significantly different in other ways as well. Much of it is poetry, a style which in itself indicates careful thought and precise detail, using images and symbols that appeal to the senses. The apocalyptic nature of the book is evident in the description of God setting up His own kingdom. So when Zechariah refers to the fountain, he is talking about a fountain in the heavenly kingdom, one which would provide constant cleansing.

God's promise in Zechariah 13:1 is still relevant today. We are given great hope for cleansing in the fountain flowing from heaven. Though there has always been a fountain of forgiveness from God available to anyone who asks, it is often forgotten. Much as we forget the search for the fountain of youth, so do we also forget the importance of the gift of God's forgiveness. The difference in the analogy is that there really is no fountain of youth, but God's fountain is real and available to all. That is the marvelous thing: that we don't have to go searching for it, we only have to ask in order to receive. The promised fountain is God's way of telling us that forgiveness is always available, and so is He.

*Craigie, Peter C., *Twelve Prophets* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), vol. 2, p. 216.

by Annemarie Hamlin

Annemarie Hamlin is a free-lance writer and a graduate student of English literature in Southern California.

A Cleansing Fountain

HOW TO

Key Text: Revelation 7:17

How do the blood of the covenant, thirty pieces of silver, a potter's field, a cleansing fountain, wounded hands, and a pierced body help me be a better person today?

It is easier to show how the prophets accurately predicted the events surrounding the death of Christ than it is to answer that practical question. But take a few minutes and look at just one of Zechariah's illustrations: **the cleansing fountain**. What is the fountain? How does it cleanse? Is it just for David, or is it also available for me?

All of those are valid questions, especially as we look into such an ancient Old Testament picture of God's salvation plan.

1. What is the fountain?

Christ Himself came to earth to take away our sins, to cleanse us (1 John 3:5). The fountain to which Zechariah refers is simply the wonderful presence of Christ, our purifier and cleanser.

2. How does it cleanse? The old song says "there is power in the blood," a power that makes us "free from the burden of sin." Christ, by opening the fountain of His blood, offers a forgiveness that actually changes the attitudes, understandings, and desires of each who accepts the gift. No, we cannot draw a chemical diagram showing how the synapses are altered, but we can

know that we are different people when we are delivered from sin's slavery into the freedom of God.

The fountain of His blood, His perfect life, washes away our impurities and gives us an open and friendly relationship with the God who finds loving us irresistible. Please note that this fountain cleanses more than just external lifestyle. It cleanses even the desires by actually washing out the defective old attitudes and interests and replacing them with new pure ones.

3. Who benefits from the fountain? Anyone who is willing to get into the flow! It is not just for the king, but for *all* the inhabitants of Jerusalem. For anyone who wants peace and freedom enough to ask for them.

So, how can you ask?

a. Believe that God's offer of forgiveness, peace, and freedom (and of a clean Godlike way of thinking) is real.

b. Choose to accept that offer.

c. Tell Him you have made that choice. Tell Him honestly, candidly explaining your reasons and your hopes.

d. Focus on Him and all He has promised. Purposefully move your attention away from the gutter and all that Satan has scattered there to the good gifts God is giving to you. Remember, the best way to get clean is to immerse yourself in the fountain.

And, remember the Lamb is your Shepherd. He is leading you to fountains of "living water." He is making you a better person.

by Dick Duerksen

Dick Duerksen is vice-president for enrollment services at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Friday, December 22

Believe Me, I Know How You Feel

OPINION

Key Text: Hebrews 4:15, 16

To parents grieving for a deceased child, the expression "I know how you feel" has real meaning only when it comes from another parent who has experienced the same sorrow.

Many can sympathize with the bereavers, but only those who have shared that experience can empathize.

Experience, as the saying goes, is the best teacher. Without some degree of experience behind it, sympathy is merely like the theory we read in a textbook. Empathy, however, occurs when that theory is tested and applied to real situations. Empathy results from experience.

As a college instructor, I often find myself empathizing with many of my students because I, at some point during my collegiate years, experienced situations similar to theirs.

I can sympathize with the honor student who wants to maintain that precious GPA so he can gain acceptance into a prestigious graduate school. However, I *empathize* with that average student who at times during his college career teeters on the brink of academic probation because some of

my own grades in college came with great effort.

When my students tell me of their struggles with studies, their problems with peers, or their failing finances, I can empathize because I remember those same experiences.

Likewise, Jesus empathizes with you because He understands your trials. He knows life down here is tough because He experienced it firsthand—not from a nebulous view high above, but at street level among people who hated Him because of who He was.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are," Hebrews 4:15 affirms. He knows how you feel and He empathizes with you.

True, your problems may not always disappear. But, your burdens will be lighter because He is there to bear them.

REACT

1. Are trials intended to weaken or strengthen? (See *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 470-472.)
2. What makes you think your problems are so unique that Jesus hasn't experienced them and can't help you solve them?
3. What prevents you from turning your burdens over to Him?

by Morris Brown, Jr.

Morris Brown, Jr., is a communication instructor at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Lesson 13, December 24-30

When Mountains Melt Like Wax



“The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name” (Zechariah 14:9, NIV).

Sunday, December 24

God, the Mighty Father

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Zechariah 14:1-21 and selected verses from Zechariah 12 and 13.

In her book *Three Came Home*, Agnes Newton Keith tells the story of her three-year captivity in an internment camp in North Borneo during World War II. Separated from her husband, she was forced to scrap and barter with prisoners and guards in order to keep herself and her young son alive. Things got so desperate that she once traded a \$100 dress for six aspirin tablets and a gold brooch for rotted fish paste.

Besides the constant fear of starvation there were other things to be endured. Agnes was almost raped, a guard broke her ribs, and she continually suffered from malaria. Her little son was the only reason she had for living.

At various times during her captivity rumors would circulate around the camp that freedom would come on such and such a day. Hopes would rise only to be dashed to the ground when the expected day of freedom came and went. Agnes grew tired of the emotional roller coaster. "When I see American sailors in Kuching Square I'll know we are free."

Although the emperor sued for peace in August, 1945, the prisoners weren't released until the following month, because of the camp's isolated position and the

heavy fighting still going on in North Borneo. Finally, American and Australian troops took over the camp. Agnes, now reunited with her husband, went to Kuching Square to see the victors who had risked their lives to save them. The Allied soldiers moved around the city letting the defeated enemy know which side had won so there would be no risk of more fighting.

Yet these tough men showed a completely different side to the newly released prisoners. Agnes never heard a curse or saw an unkind action from any of them. Tenderly caring for the wounded, they comforted the men and women. And they treated every child as a little brother or sister. "We wept for their kindness," said Agnes.

Eventually, everyone was sent home to freedom—a freedom that many of them had previously taken for granted. Agnes wrote: "I now know the value of freedom. . . . The right to live with, to touch, and to love my husband and children. The right to look around me without fear of seeing people beaten."

God's justice and power are going to let Satan know who is the victor and justly so. Yet to us, His children, He will be a gentle Father carrying us from a prison of misery and degradation to the freedom of Home. "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36, NIV).

Agnes Newton Keith, *Three Came Home* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947).

by Julie Murdoch

Julie Murdoch is a senior English major at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Salvation Is From the Lord!

LOGOS

Theme: *Triumph and vindication. The faithful remnant will be refined as gold, and Jerusalem will be secure and strong in the Lord, her true defense. The triumphant King will descend on the Mount of Olives with His saints to judge the wicked, eradicate evil, and establish His kingdom over all the earth.*

The last section of Zechariah proclaims the coming "day of the Lord" (14:1), a common concept among the Old Testament prophets (see Amos 5:18-20; Zech 1:7ff; Joel 2:1ff). Although this section deals with a prominent Old Testament motif, it is not an easy passage to interpret. Zechariah's portrayal of a siege and partial conquest of Jerusalem followed by the Lord's appearance on the Mount of Olives to battle for His people (Zech. 14:1-5) is admittedly difficult to understand. It seems best to interpret it as describing a series of events that would have transpired at the second coming of the Lord if Israel had fulfilled its destiny and accepted the One whom God sent to save them. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* concurs with this position (see vol. 4, pp. 1116, 1117; see also the general article in vol. 4, pp. 25-38, "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy"). Due to the rejection of Jesus by Israel, some of the specific details narrated in this section will never

find fulfillment.

However, this does not render Zechariah's concluding section irrelevant to us. While some of the specific events depicted may never happen, several of the broad themes emphasized by Zechariah are taken up by John in the book of Revelation and applied to the last days (Revelation contains some thirty-one quotations from the book of Zechariah, thus confirming its eschatological importance). Let us examine some of these major themes that have significance in the days ahead.

1. God's People Will Find Their Strength in a Relationship With Him (read Zech. 12:5-9)

"The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the Lord Almighty is their God" (Zech. 12:5, NIV).

"Because" is the key word in the above verse. Here Zechariah is indicating that the only way to have strength is to have a living connection with the ultimate source of strength. This theme is a prominent one throughout Scripture, but it finds special meaning in the last days. The vindication of God's people, their final triumph, is a direct result of their relationship with their Lord. One of the most marked contrasts in all of Scripture is presented in the following verses. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NIV), and "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13, NIV). We either have the strength to do

by Greg A. King

Greg A. King is an assistant professor of religion at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

everything, including passing through the time of trouble, or we are able to do nothing, least of all survive the coming crisis. There is no middle ground. Either we are strong through knowing Him; or concerning spiritual matters we can do nothing at all. Zechariah emphasizes this necessary connection earlier in his book, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty" (4:6, NIV).

What things can we do to establish a relationship with the Lord that will give us spiritual strength? Why do so many people lack this relationship?

2. After Being Refined and Tested, a Remnant Will Be Saved (read Zech. 13:8, 9)

"In the whole land," declares the Lord, 'two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold' " (Zech. 13:8, 9, NIV).

This theme tends to cause us anxiety. Zechariah declares that among Israel, the professed people of God, only a remnant, a fraction of the whole, will survive. And even this small group needs to be refined before they can be saved. This same theme, the survival of a remnant following a period of tribulation, is found in the heart of the book of Revelation (see chs. 12, 13). While nearly the whole earth is following the beast (13:3), another group, very small by comparison, risks persecution and even death because they are loyal to God. But this frightening ordeal is a refining process and when all is said and done, they are thankful for it. Just as gold comes forth from the refining fire with its impurities removed, so God's remnant shine all the brighter after passing through the furnace of affliction.

Since the gift of Christ's righteousness is what prepares us for heaven, why do we need to be "refined" or tested before our Lord returns? Why is it that only a remnant will be saved? What must I do to be part of this remnant?

3. God Will Intervene for His People When Their Destruction Seems Imminent (read Zech. 14:1-5)

"I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured. . . . Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations" (Zech. 14:2, 3, NIV).

Zechariah describes the city of Jerusalem surrounded by an innumerable army composed of all the nations of the earth. But just at the moment when these enemies seem poised to decimate God's people, the Lord intervenes on their behalf. This theme of God saving His children when they are on the verge of destruction is common in Scripture. It was only when the Israelites were trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea (see Ex. 14) and had no other avenue of escape that God's mighty breath divided the sea and His people walked through on dry land. And according to Revelation and *The Great Controversy*, it is only when spiritual Israel is hemmed in on every side, persecuted by the "kings of the whole earth," seemingly destined for extermination, that God will bring deliverance. As Ellen White eloquently stated, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."^{*}

Why do you think God waits until His people are nearly wiped out before intervening with deliverance? What lessons do we learn while waiting for a last-minute deliverance?

4. The City of God Will Stand Secure Throughout

Eternity, Unthreatened by Enemies (read Zech. 14:9-15)

"It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure" (Zech. 14:11, NIV).

What a promise this was to Israel! It seemed as if the very survival of their capital city was in constant jeopardy. If they were not being threatened by the Philistines or the Assyrians, then the Babylonians or the Egyptians were pressing at the walls of Jerusalem. And Revelation's promise of the New Jerusalem, the Lord's impregnable city, takes on added meaning for God's children today. We are not as secure as we might think. What if an ambitious dictator, one who has no respect for human life, should successfully develop nuclear weapons? Or what if there should be a major foul-up by the computers which are supposed to warn us of nuclear attack and enable us to respond in kind? Historians have documented several times that our world has teetered on the brink of nuclear holocaust. How wonderful it is then to know that after the forces of evil have been destroyed, the New Jerusalem will stand safe and secure throughout eternity, unthreatened by enemies.

5. Every Person, Place and Thing Will Be Pure and Holy in God's New Kingdom (read Zech. 14:16-21)

"On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the

bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar" (Zech. 14:20, NIV).

The inscription, "Holy to the Lord," was found on the miter of the high priest. But in the new order envisioned by Zechariah, even common, mundane objects like the ornamental bells on horses would be engraved with these words. The distinction between the sacred and the secular, the holy and the common, would disappear because everything would be holy. And indeed, this is Revelation's picture of the city of God. There is no common source of water; it is the River of Life. We find no regular source of light; the Lamb is the lamp. The tree depicted is no ordinary oak or maple; it is the Tree of Life. The Lamb Himself comprises the temple. Nothing is common, especially the people. All those who were unholy and defiled were denied access to the city (Rev. 21:27). Although in the Old Testament only the high priest could enter the presence of God, and that once a year, in the New Jerusalem, everyone "will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. . . . And they will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:4, 5, NIV).

Would I find it enjoyable or boring to live in a place where everything and everybody is pure and holy? Why? Will my feelings automatically change at the Second Coming? Why or why not?

*The Acts of the Apostles, p. 146.

Tuesday, December 26

A Victorious God

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Psalm 37:29

In a world that often highlights moments of confusion and desolation, it is sometimes difficult to imagine our earth free of pain. Somehow God's promises concerning His final triumph and vindication appear unusually distant. And we may find ourselves not altogether certain if this earth will ever be free from its present troubles.

Fortunately, we are friends with an extraordinary God. And incredibly enough, He understands and fulfills our need to be reassured of His love. Through reading the Bible we are able to emerge convinced of His caring nature, effective love, and awesome power. He does not even leave us wanting or ill-informed, for He has allowed a descriptive narrative of last day events through the writings of Ellen White.

In fact, in Ellen White's book, *The Great Controversy*, she points out that there will come a day when Satan will see how "his hellish plots have been powerless to destroy those who have put their trust in Jesus."¹ He will have to come to terms knowing that the results of his work have only led to failure and ruin. God's final

victory will finally become a reality! And "Satan's work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed in pain. Now God's creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations."²

Truly, this is an encouraging truth. Being in the midst of our world today, surrounded by its awful tragedies, events that are crushing to the soul, it is an inspiring note to see and feel the final victory of our God. Certainly, there will come a day when we will see that the great controversy has ended. On that day, "Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. . . . All things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."³

REACT

1. Could you suggest some things I could do to keep myself from becoming discouraged when I feel as though Satan is "winning the battle"?
2. How can I share with someone the truth of God's final victory?
3. How can this truth become more of a reality for me?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 669.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 673.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 678.

by Iris Paradez

Iris Paradez is an elementary education major at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Wednesday, December 27

The Coming King and Shepherd

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Zechariah 14:9

C. Hassell Bullock's book, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, provides valuable insights about the importance of Zechariah's message both to those who had lost interest in rebuilding the Temple and to those looking ahead to the coming Messiah:

"Haggai brought first witness to the declining enthusiasm for Temple restoration, and Zechariah advanced upon the hopeful disposition that his colleague Haggai had enunciated. Without the assistance of those two prophets, one can only wonder how long it might have taken to restore the Temple and insure its centrality in the new community. Obviously Persian benevolence was insufficient by itself, and even that too failed with the passing of Cyrus.

"What Ezekiel was to the last pre-exilic and exilic eras, Zechariah was to the post-exilic age. Not only did he outline the program of restoration, the heart of which was the Temple and priesthood, but he, like Ezekiel, filled in much detail about the eschatological age that lay ahead. That is particularly true of the last six

chapters of his book. With a new urgency to establish a durable kingdom, he proclaimed the Lord as king over Judah and promised that He would become king over all the nations."¹

"The phrase [the kingdom of God] does not occur in Zechariah, but the book is replete with the description of the coming kingdom of God. Admittedly there is much in chapters 9-14 that is difficult, if not impossible, to explain. However, certain ideas are rather clear. Yahweh will cut off the implements of war and establish His kingdom of peace through the humble king who makes His royal entry riding on a donkey (9:9, 10). Indeed, Yahweh Himself will take the task of conquest in His own hands and set the captives free (9:11-15).

"The royal person who will dominate the new age will be more than a king—he will be the shepherd of the Lord's flock (11:4-7), who will be ungratefully detested by the sheep. When he should ask for his wages, they will certify their ungrateful spirit by paying him the price of a slave (11:12/Ex. 21:32). The king and the shepherd of Zechariah are evidently one and the same person, for in 11:6 the two words occur in parallel language."²

1. C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 310.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

by Thomas Seibold

Thomas Seibold is news coordinator at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Thursday, December 28

The TODAY Kingdom

HOW TO

Key Text: Zechariah 14:8, 9

Last week we talked about the fountain that cleanses. This week we find the same "living water" flowing out of Jerusalem to "cleanse" all people everywhere.

If Jerusalem is a figure of God's people, then it follows that there should be a stream filled with God's living gifts of forgiveness, peace, and freedom flowing from every dedicated Christian. After all, He is busy making us like Himself, a living object lesson of His love (see 2 Cor. 3:18 and 5:20).

Zechariah's name means "God remembers." That's encouraging because it is a promise that God truly will remember us and give us a full opportunity to accept His gifts. It is also a promise that He will come and establish a kingdom of peaceful freedom for all.

But for us, right now, Zechariah may more appropriately be interpreted as "We remember God." If we do remember Him, then as His city, as His chosen persons, we will experience the new kingdom where there is only one Lord (Zech. 14:9).

I especially like the part of the promise that says there will be only "one Lord" and His will be the "only name." We live in a world where multitudinous gods are scrambling for our allegiance. Each tiny facet of life seems to

demand our full attention and energy, leaving little time for concentrating on the Lord and the coming of His day. Yet while each of those gods is offering only temporary and limited fulfillment, God is there offering permanent and total freedom.

Only one Lord? Wouldn't it be wonderful to live in a situation where all of the competing gods are eliminated. Where our desires and interests all fit perfectly with the very finest and most pleasant options available. And where our allegiance to the one God frees us to become all we are capable of becoming.

So many of the little things currently screaming out for our attention are simply empty of any real meaning. We seem to be a nation of people who are amusing themselves to death. Look around you at all that takes your time and fills your attention each day. Are you focusing on much that is irrelevant and empty of long-term value? Or is your mind filled with thoughts of God and His promised gifts of **living water**.

No, we do not have to wait for the arrival of the "day of the Lord" to start drinking the **living water**. John reminds us that God's kingdom is ours to experience, "to the full," right now (see John 10:10 and 1 John 1). The Good News is that His freedom can begin today, if we remember Him today.

by Dick Duerksen

Dick Duerksen is vice-president for enrollment services at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

The Flexibility of God's Plans

OPINION

Key Text: Zechariah 14:2-11

One of the many challenges of biblical scholarship is how to determine which details from Old Testament prophecies were conditional upon Israel's compliance with God's plan for them and which prophecies are still relevant for Christians today. One only has to listen to certain television evangelists try to force all of the Old Testament prophecies into an intelligent scheme for the future of the world to realize the complexities involved in this monumental task.

Since 1948 the modern state of Israel has been the focus of innumerable efforts to parallel the details of its development with Old Testament passages. Its very existence as a nation forced many scholars back to their Bibles to explain how something occurred that they thought was impossible. Some groups have tried to predict the future of the United States by endeavoring to identify us with the ten lost tribes of Israel and thus apply Old Testament prophecies to the development of American history.

The task of rightly dividing the Word has been made somewhat easier for us through the use of Ellen White's writings. First of all she helps us understand that Israel's failure to be faithful to God rendered God's plan for Israel inoperative. Sec-

ond she helps us determine which details from the prophecies God is still able to use. It is our understanding that the content of the book of Revelation would be considerably different had Israel accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Perhaps there would have even been no need for a book of Revelation. God has throughout the ages been forced to continually revise His plans for His people because of their noncompliance with His will. This does not mean that God does not know the future. What it means is that God always plans the best first and will only go to second best after He has exhausted all efforts to make the best plan work. This process does not say much that is favorable about humanity but it speaks wonderfully for our God who just will not let go of us.

REACT

What details from Zechariah 14 are not compatible with our concept of the coming physical kingdom of God?

How would the book of Revelation be different if Israel had accepted Jesus as her Messiah?

What if any is the relevance of Jesus using the Mount of Olives for the foundation of the New Jerusalem?

What role should the Spirit of Prophecy play in determining exactly what details of Old Testament prophecies are still applicable?

by H. Roger Bothwell

H. Roger Bothwell was pastor of the Pacific Union College Church, Angwin, California at this writing.

Next Quarter's Lessons

Book of Matthew

For readers who have not yet received a copy of COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY for first quarter, 1990, here is a summary of the first two lessons.

Lesson 1: World Views

Scripture: Matthew 1 and 2

Theme: World Views—a discussion about the impact that philosophies of life and world perspective have on one's belief and ethical system.

Lesson 2: Freedom

Scripture: Matthew 3

Theme: Freedom—This topic is especially crucial for young adults. For the first time in their lives they are becoming self-sufficient and making decisions based on their own perspective. Freedom becomes the issue that focuses our attention during this study section.

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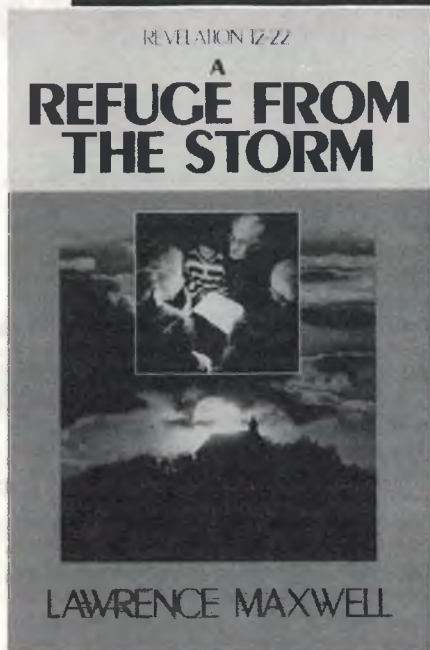
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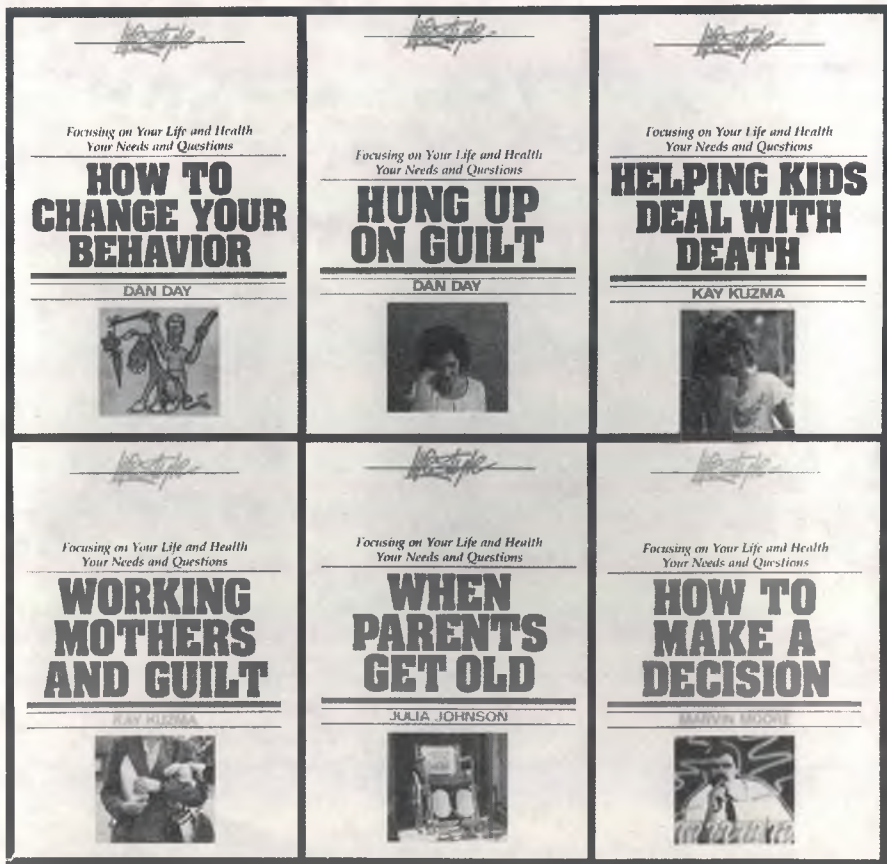
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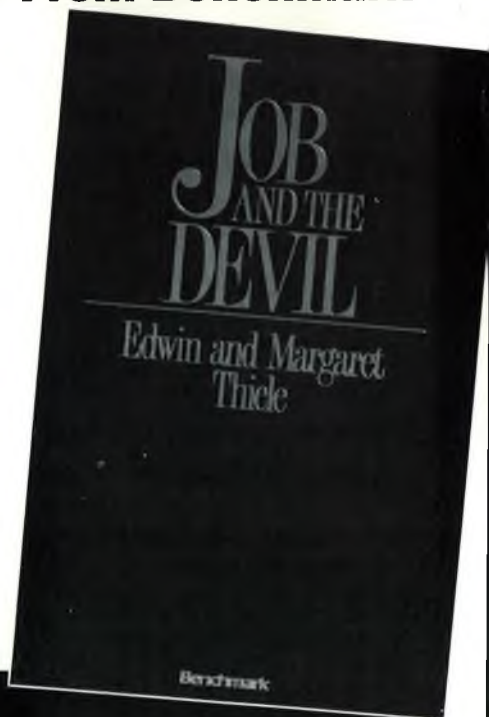
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