

SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division



The Coming *Kingdom*

Vol. 91, No. 4

October-December 2015

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

Illustrations: Good Salt on the front cover; Map-Resources on pp. 4, 51, and back cover.

Sabbath Bible Lessons (USPS 005-118), Vol. 91, No. 4, October-December, 2015. Published quarterly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, Sabbath School Department. Copyright © 2015, printed, and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, Virginia 24019-5048, U.S.A. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022-9993.

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Annual subscriptions in U.S.A.: U.S. \$16.95. Large print \$24.95. International (airmail) \$22.00. Single copies \$5.50. Large print \$8.50. Please send subscription requests and payments (in U.S. currency only) to the address below. Prices subject to change without notice. POSTMASTER, please send address changes to: *Sabbath Bible Lessons*, P. O. Box 7240, Roanoke, VA 24019-0240.

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Annual subscriptions in Australia: AU \$20.50 (individual copies \$6.00). Other countries, economy air \$26.00. Please send subscription requests and payments (in Australian currency) to the address below.

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Foreword

We live in momentous times. On every front—science, religion, politics, the natural world—new things are seen daily which have never been witnessed before. New scientific discoveries continue to amaze us, while the condition of nature presents worrying trends, and the quest for freedom continues amid new conflicts and unrest across the globe.

Many people live in expectation of great events to come. Those expectations vary widely, but the whole earth is preparing for something. For the Christian, the near future is set to reveal the final events in the showdown between good and evil. It is certainly a great and awe-inspiring time to be alive.

Among various religions and cultures, there are many different theories about what the future may hold. The word “Adventist” in our name denotes an expectation that the coming of Jesus is imminent. However, though there are many Christians, their expectations of His coming are not all the same.

Just like Jesus’ first coming to earth as a man was misunderstood by His own people, so the second coming is not well understood today. Common views on the subject are often based on a wrong premise, leaving out important points and leading to dangerous conclusions.

The nature of the kingdom, the final events, what it takes to be ready—all of these are points on which there are different opinions and conflicting views. However, something as important as the end of the world and the ushering in of the everlasting kingdom must be as fully comprehended as the Word of God has revealed it.

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), is a prayer that not only refers to the present but also looks forward to that time when God’s will shall be carried out by all of earth’s inhabitants. But how will this become a reality? Rather than describing popular errors, we will study together the principles of truth from God’s word. The error will be dispelled by truth itself, just as darkness naturally disappears in the presence of light. Teachers are encouraged to become familiar with the issues involved, in order to appropriately deal with them in their classes, so that particular questions may be answered.

This quarterly is for your encouragement and learning. It explores questions and issues which are current in the world today. It is our hope and prayer that you will receive a blessing from the study of the subjects presented.

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a chapel in the West Indonesia Mission

The fourth most populous country on earth, Indonesia's 2014 population is estimated at 252.8 million. It is the biggest muslim country in the world. While the Islamic religion is practiced amongst the largest portion of the population, there is significant religious diversity.

Hindus, Budhists, Roman Catholics, Prot-estants (Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, and other Christian denominations) and other religions are free to practice their faith in this country.

The late Bro. Stephen Barat opened the work in Indonesia during his brief visit here in 1973. Bro. A.C. Sas soon followed up the interest and in July of the same year, in the North Sulawesi area, fifty souls were baptized. In the years following, a strong Union Conference was established and remained so for two decades. However, due to a number of difficulties in later years, the Union was eventually dissolved. In 2011 a minister was sent from the Philippines to Indonesia to assist in rebuilding the work here. We thank God that we have now been reorganized into two fields and one mission.

Our West Indonesia Mission, which includes Jakarta, is the smallest unit in the country. Our church in Jakarta used to be the most stable of our churches in this country. However, the spiritual difficulties experienced over many years reduced the membership. As a result of the spiritual work carried out since 2011, we praise God that the church is now growing. Many new members have been added and the number of interested souls in the truth has increased. In September of 2014 we were organized as the West Indonesia Mission.

We now need to renovate our old headquarters in Jakarta and acquire a place of worship for a newly organized church in Cileungsi. Since our West Indonesia Mission is yet in her infancy, our funds are very meager. We therefore wish to ask our brethren, sisters, and friends around the world to give generously on the first Sabbath of October 2015, towards the work of the Lord here in West Indonesia.

We thank you in advance for your financial support and pray that we will soon be able to renovate the old headquarters and buy a new house of worship to the glory of God.

Your brothers and sisters from the West Indonesia Mission



God's Love for You

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

“Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel. . . . This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1113.

Suggested Reading: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 9–15.

Sunday

September 27

1. A DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE

- a. What is the most enduring characteristic of our Creator? 1 John 4:16.

“‘God is love,’ is written upon every opening bud, upon the petals of every flower, and upon every spire of grass. . . . All things in nature testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy. His prohibitions and injunctions are not intended merely to display His authority, but in all that He does He has the well-being of His children in view.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 600.

- b. How did God most fully demonstrate His love? John 3:16; Romans 5:6–8.

“The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother’s yearning sympathy for her wayward child.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 15.

2. SAVED FROM SIN

- a. **What great mission did Jesus accomplish by His sacrifice? Matthew 1:21.**
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“Jesus might have remained at the Father’s side. He might have retained the glory of heaven and the homage of the angels. But He chose to give back the scepter into the Father’s hands, and to step down from the throne of the universe, that He might bring light to the benighted and life to the perishing.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 22, 23.

“Christ’s mission could be fulfilled only through suffering. Before Him was a life of sorrow, hardship, and conflict, and an ignominious death. He must bear the sins of the whole world. He must endure separation from His Father’s love.”—*Ibid.*, p. 129.

- b. **What is His will for every person? 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4.**
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“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.”—*Ibid.*, p. 25.

- c. **How do we receive the benefit of Christ’s death for our sins? Acts 16:31; 1 John 1:9.**
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“The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 37.

“Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts.”—*Ibid.*, p. 26.

3. SAVED FROM EVIL WITHIN

- a. **Being saved includes not only forgiveness, but what else? Titus 2:11–14; Galatians 2:20.**
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“It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. . . . Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 18.

- b. **What does the power of God do within the converted Christian? Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:20, 21.**
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“The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

“As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan’s temptations.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 943.

- c. **What should be our constant prayer? Psalm 139:23, 24.**
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“No man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 159.

4. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- a. **What inward battle must be fought every day? Proverbs 16:32; Ephesians 6:11.**
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“The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 43.

“The cross stands as a pledge that not one need be lost, that abundant help is provided for every soul.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 96.

- b. **What will be the final step in the salvation of the righteous? Hebrews 9:28; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54.**
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“Though [those who sleep in Jesus] may have been deformed, diseased, or disfigured in this mortal life, yet in their resurrected and glorified body their individual identity will be perfectly preserved, and we shall recognize, in the face radiant with the light shining from the face of Jesus, the lineaments of those we love.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 219.

“The living righteous are changed ‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye’ (1 Corinthians 15:52). At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 645.

- c. **When will the warfare be finally over? 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.**
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“Nearest the throne [of Christ in the New Jerusalem] are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Saviour with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, and the millions, of all ages, who were martyred for their faith. And beyond is the ‘great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, . . . before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands’ (Revelation 7:9). Their warfare is ended, their victory won. They have run the race and reached the prize. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph, the white robe an emblem of the spotless righteousness of Christ which now is theirs.”—*Ibid.*, p. 665.

5. THE HAND THAT KNOCKS

- a. What invitation does Jesus extend to every soul today? John 7:37, 38; Revelation 22:17.

“The same divine mind that is working upon the things of nature is speaking to the hearts of men and creating an inexpressible craving for something they have not. The things of the world cannot satisfy their longing. The Spirit of God is pleading with them to seek for those things that alone can give peace and rest—the grace of Christ, the joy of holiness. Through influences seen and unseen, our Saviour is constantly at work to attract the minds of men from the unsatisfying pleasures of sin to the infinite blessings that may be theirs in Him. To all these souls, who are vainly seeking to drink from the broken cisterns of this world, the divine message is addressed, [Revelation 22:17 quoted].

“You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 28.

- b. What should we remember about the hand that knocks on our heart’s door? Revelation 3:20; Zechariah 13:6.

“We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God, and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 103, 104.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How has God demonstrated His love to you?
2. What is the significance of Christ’s death for every human being?
3. How does salvation go beyond the mere forgiveness of past sins?
4. What will be the final step in completing the work of salvation?
5. What makes today the best day to respond to Jesus’ knock on your heart’s door?

God's Kingdom Challenged

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

“By the facts unfolded in the progress of the great controversy, God will demonstrate the principles of His rules of government, which have been falsified by Satan and by all whom he has deceived.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 79.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 33-43.

Sunday

October 4

1. THE EVERLASTING THRONE

- a. From the descriptions of the position and power of the Son of God, what can we learn about God's government? Psalm 45:6; Hebrews 1:1-3.

“Not by its own inherent energy does the earth produce its bounties, and year by year continue its motion around the sun. An unseen hand guides the planets in their circuit of the heavens.”—*Education*, p. 99.

- b. What do we know about the law which forms the basis of this kingdom? Psalm 19:7; Matthew 22:37-40.

“The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 60.

“The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

2. A RIVAL KINGDOM

- a. Through the figure of the king of Tyre, how does the Bible describe the fall of Lucifer? Ezekiel 28:11–15.

“Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 493, 494.

- b. How did Lucifer, now called Satan, challenge God’s government? Isaiah 14:12–14.

“Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God. He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37.

- c. What did this challenge result in? Revelation 12:7–9; Luke 10:18.

- d. Having been cast into the earth, what position did Satan assume? Job 1:7; John 14:30.

“Satan’s dominion was that wrested from Adam, but Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator. His was not an independent rule. The earth is God’s, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan’s hands, Christ still remained the rightful King. . . . Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 129, 130.

3. THE CONTROVERSY ON EARTH

- a. What was the original position in which human beings were placed? Psalm 8:4–6.
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- b. Through the serpent, how did Satan seek to draw Adam and Eve into the controversy? Genesis 3:1, 4, 5.
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“By partaking of this tree [in the midst of the garden], [the serpent] declared, they would attain to a more exalted sphere of existence and enter a broader field of knowledge. He himself had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and as a result had acquired the power of speech. And he insinuated that the Lord jealously desired to withhold it from them, lest they should be exalted to equality with Himself. It was because of its wonderful properties, imparting wisdom and power, that He had prohibited them from tasting or even touching it. The tempter intimated that the divine warning was not to be actually fulfilled; it was designed merely to intimidate them. How could it be possible for them to die? Had they not eaten of the tree of life? God had been seeking to prevent them from reaching a nobler development and finding greater happiness.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54.

- c. Through Satan’s temptations, what happened to the human race? Romans 6:16; 5:12.
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- d. How was humanity’s dominion lost on the earth? Genesis 3:24; 9:2.
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“Under the curse of sin all nature was to witness to man of the character and results of rebellion against God. When God made man He made him ruler over the earth and all living creatures. So long as Adam remained loyal to Heaven, all nature was in subjection to him. But when he rebelled against the divine law, the inferior creatures were in rebellion against his rule. Thus the Lord, in His great mercy, would show men the sacredness of His law, and lead them, by their own experience, to see the danger of setting it aside, even in the slightest degree.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 59, 60.

4. HOPE IN A COMING KING

- a. Describe the promise embedded in the curse upon the serpent. Genesis 3:15.
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“This sentence, uttered in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. While it foretold war between man and Satan, it declared that the power of the great adversary would finally be broken. Adam and Eve stood as criminals before the righteous Judge, awaiting the sentence which transgression had incurred; but before they heard of the life of toil and sorrow which must be their portion, or of the decree that they must return to dust, they listened to words that could not fail to give them hope. Though they must suffer from the power of their mighty foe, they could look forward to final victory.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 65, 66.

- b. How was this promise to be fulfilled? John 12:31, 32; 1 Timothy 3:16.
-

“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal’ (Romans 16:25, RV). It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, ‘that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16).”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

- c. In what royal language did the prophets describe the character of the coming Messiah? Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 9:6, 7.
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“This hope of redemption [of humans and their forfeited dominion] through the advent of the Son of God as Saviour and King has never become extinct in the hearts of men. From the beginning there have been some whose faith has reached out beyond the shadows of the present to the realities of the future.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 682.

5. TWO CLASSES DEVELOPED

- a. Comparing the following verses, describe the two classes of people that developed within the human race. Romans 8:14; 1 John 3:1; Romans 1:21, 22; Ephesians 2:1–3.

“As men increased, the distinction between the two classes [of worshippers] became more marked. There was an open profession of loyalty to God on the part of one, as there was of contempt and disobedience on the part of the other.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 80.

- b. How does the experience of Cain and Abel illustrate the state of humanity? Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12.

“Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to depend upon their own merits; theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus it is not able to bring man into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned. . . . There is no other provision made whereby they can be released from the thralldom of sin.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 72, 73.

- c. What choice is presented to each child of Adam today? Romans 6:16.
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PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we know that the law of God has existed from eternity?
2. How did Lucifer challenge the very foundation of God’s government?
3. How is humanity today still being deceived by the serpent’s lies?
4. What was the hope which animated the faith of the believers in ancient times?
5. Identify the modern equivalents of Cain and Abel.

Heirs of the Kingdom

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:5).

“All that are Christ’s are ‘Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’—heirs to ‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away’—the earth freed from the curse of sin.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 170.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 681–702.

Sunday

October 11

1. LOOKING FORWARD

a. How can the gospel be summarized? Romans 1:16, 17.

b. Who must hear it, and what choice do they need to make? Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15, 16.

“When the members of the church of God do their appointed work in the needy fields at home and abroad, in fulfillment of the gospel commission, the whole world will soon be warned and the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with power and great glory.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 111.

c. To what class of people is salvation available? Acts 10:34, 35; Romans 8:14; Ephesians 3:6.

“The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.

2. GOD'S PROMISES TO HIS ANCIENT PEOPLE

- a. What promises were given to Abraham and his descendants? Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–17.
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“Through the Jewish nation it was God’s purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. . . .

“It was for the accomplishment of this purpose that God called Abraham out from his idolatrous kindred and bade him dwell in the land of Canaan.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 286.

- b. Why did God wait till several generations after Abraham before actually causing them to possess the land of Palestine? Genesis 15:13–16.
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“The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church.”—*Ibid.*

“Although the Amorites were idolaters, whose life was justly forfeited by their great wickedness, God spared them four hundred years to give them unmistakable evidence that He was the only true God, the Maker of heaven and earth. All His wonders in bringing Israel from Egypt were known to them. Sufficient evidence was given; they might have known the truth, had they been willing to turn from their idolatry and licentiousness.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 434.

- c. What eventually happened to the Amorites? Judges 11:21–24.
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“On reaching the border of the Amorites, Israel had asked permission only to travel directly through the country, promising to observe the same rules that had governed their intercourse with other nations. When the Amorite king refused this courteous solicitation, and defiantly gathered his hosts for battle, their cup of iniquity was full, and God would now exercise His power for their overthrow.”—*Ibid.*, p. 435.

3. A COVENANT BROKEN

- a. How did Israel fail to live up to the purpose of God in placing them in the Promised Land? Judges 2:10–13.
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“Until the generation that had received instruction from Joshua became extinct, idolatry made little headway; but the parents had prepared the way for the apostasy of their children. The disregard of the Lord’s restrictions on the part of those who came in possession of Canaan sowed seeds of evil that continued to bring forth bitter fruit for many generations. The simple habits of the Hebrews had secured them physical health; but association with the heathen led to the indulgence of appetite and passion, which gradually lessened physical strength and enfeebled the mental and moral powers. By their sins the Israelites were separated from God; His strength was removed from them, and they could no longer prevail against their enemies. Thus they were brought into subjection to the very nations that through God they might have subdued.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 544, 545.

- b. What happened because of the influence of the first king of the northern half of the divided nation? 1 Kings 14:15, 16.
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“Had Israel heeded the messages of the prophets, they would have been spared the humiliation that followed. It was because they had persisted in turning aside from His law that God was compelled to let them go into captivity. . . .

“In every age, transgression of God’s law has been followed by the same result. In the days of Noah, when every principle of rightdoing was violated and iniquity became so deep and widespread that God could no longer bear with it. . . . In Abraham’s day the people of Sodom openly defied God and His law; and there followed the same wickedness, the same corruption, the same unbridled indulgence that had marked the antediluvian world. The inhabitants of Sodom passed the limits of divine forbearance, and there was kindled against them the fire of God’s vengeance.

“The time preceding the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel was one of similar disobedience and of similar wickedness. God’s law was counted as a thing of nought, and this opened the floodgates of iniquity upon Israel.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 297.

4. THE KING OF JUDAH

- a. **How long would the tribe of Judah maintain its royal distinction? Genesis 49:10; Ezekiel 21:25–27.**

“The lion, king of the forest, is a fitting symbol of this tribe, from which came David, and the Son of David, Shiloh, the true ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah,’ to whom all powers shall finally bow and all nations render homage.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 236.

- b. **Who was “Shiloh” (the One “whose right it is”), and when did He come? Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1–9.**

“Century after century passed away; finally the voices of the prophets ceased. The hand of the oppressor was heavy upon Israel. As the Jews departed from God, faith grew dim, and hope well-nigh ceased to illuminate the future. The words of the prophets were uncomprehended by many; and those whose faith should have continued strong were ready to exclaim, ‘The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth’ (Ezekiel 12:22). But in heaven’s council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 700.

“While few understood the nature of Christ’s mission, there was a widespread expectation of a mighty prince who should establish his kingdom in Israel, and who should come as a deliverer to the nations.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 34.

- c. **What is the nature of His kingdom? John 18:36, 37. What will take place when the kingdom is fully proclaimed? Matthew 24:14.**

“He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart.

“Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit.”—*Ibid.*, p. 509.

5. A HOUSE DESOLATE

- a. When Christ was rejected by His own nation, what did He say? Matthew 23:37, 38. When was the desolation complete (literally as well as spiritually)? Matthew 24:1, 2.

“Hitherto [Jesus] had called the temple His Father’s house; but now, as the Son of God should pass out from those walls, God’s presence would be withdrawn forever from the temple built to His glory. Henceforth its ceremonies would be meaningless, its services a mockery.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 620.

“[Jesus] saw Jerusalem encompassed with armies, the besieged inhabitants driven to starvation and death. . . . He saw that the stubbornness of the Jews, as evinced in their rejection of His salvation, would also lead them to refuse submission to the invading armies. . . . He saw the wretched inhabitants suffering torture on the rack and by crucifixion, the beautiful palaces destroyed, the temple in ruins, and of its massive walls not one stone left upon another, while the city was plowed like a field.”—*Ibid.*, p. 577.

- b. In rejecting Christ, what did the leaders of the Jews bring upon themselves? Matthew 27:24, 25. Whom did they choose as their ruler, and what did this ruler eventually do? John 19:14, 15; Luke 21:20, 24.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain God’s purpose in delaying the conquest of Canaan.
2. What can God’s people learn today from Israel’s failure to subdue the land?
3. Why was the kingdom Jesus preached so differently from what His people expected?
4. How do the services in God’s house lose their meaning today?
5. How can I do more to share with those who need to hear the gospel?

Promises Fulfilled

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17).

“Never has the Lord been without true representatives on this earth who have made His interests their own. These witnesses for God are numbered among the spiritual Israel, and to them will be fulfilled all the covenant promises made by Jehovah to His ancient people.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 714.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 703–721.

Sunday

October 18

1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

- a. Rather than making unconditional promises, what does God expect? Jeremiah 18:7–10.
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“There is no safety except in strict obedience to the word of God. All His promises are made upon condition of faith and obedience, and a failure to comply with His commands cuts off the fulfillment to us of the rich provisions of the Scriptures.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 621, 622.

- b. What qualities does the Lord look for in people, regardless of their status or privileges? Acts 10:34, 35.
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“In the kingdom of God, position is not gained through favoritism. It is not earned, nor is it received through an arbitrary bestowal. It is the result of character. The crown and the throne are the tokens of a condition attained; they are the tokens of self-conquest through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 549.

2. TRUE ISRAEL

- a. **What is promised concerning the future of Israel? Jeremiah 33:16; Romans 11:25–27.**
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“God is abundantly able to transform the hearts of Jew and Gentile alike, and to grant to every believer in Christ the blessings promised to Israel.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 379.

- b. **What is the only path to salvation, whether one is Jew or Gentile by birth? Acts 4:10–12.**
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“It is claimed by some that the human race is in need, not of redemption, but of development—that it can refine, elevate, and regenerate itself. . . . The history of Cain shows what must be the results. It shows what man will become apart from Christ. Humanity has no power to regenerate itself. It does not tend upward, toward the divine, but downward, toward the satanic. Christ is our only hope.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 73.

- c. **What characterizes the true Israel? Romans 2:28, 29. In light of this, to whom do the promises really apply? Romans 9:6–8.**
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“The Pharisees claimed to be children of Abraham, and boasted of their possession of the oracles of God; yet these advantages did not preserve them from selfishness, malignity, greed for gain, and the basest hypocrisy. They thought themselves the greatest religionists of the world, but their so-called orthodoxy led them to crucify the Lord of glory.

“The same danger still exists. Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 309, 310.

3. ABRAHAM'S SEED

- a. What promise was made to Abraham regarding his relationship with the rest of the world? Genesis 22:18.
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“It was a high honor to which Abraham was called, that of being the father of the people who for centuries were the guardians and preservers of the truth of God for the world—of that people through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed in the advent of the promised Messiah.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 140, 141.

- b. What was meant by the term “seed” in this promise? Galatians 3:16. What does it take to be a recipient of the blessings? Verses 8, 9.
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“The Bible plainly teaches that the promises made to Abraham are to be fulfilled through Christ. All that are Christ’s are ‘Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’—heirs to ‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away’—the earth freed from the curse of sin (Galatians 3:29; 1 Peter 1:4).”—*Ibid.*, p. 170.

- c. Study the conversation recorded in John 8:31–45, then describe the type of character needed in order to participate in the spiritual relationship mentioned there.
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“The Pharisees had declared themselves the children of Abraham. Jesus told them that this claim could be established only by doing the works of Abraham. The true children of Abraham would live, as he did, a life of obedience to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 466, 467.

4. INHERITING THE LAND

- a. How were the patriarchs themselves included in the promise of inheriting the land? Exodus 6:8. What must happen in order for this promise to be fulfilled? Luke 20:34–38.
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“The heritage that God has promised to His people is not in this world. Abraham had no possession in the earth, ‘no, not so much as to set his foot on’ (Acts 7:5). He possessed great substance, and he used it to the glory of God and the good of his fellow men; but he did not look upon this world as his home. The Lord had called him to leave his idolatrous countrymen, with the promise of the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession; yet neither he nor his son nor his son’s son received it. When Abraham desired a burial place for his dead, he had to buy it of the Canaanites. His sole possession in the Land of Promise was that rock-hewn tomb in the cave of Machpelah.

“But the word of God had not failed; neither did it meet its final accomplishment in the occupation of Canaan by the Jewish people. ‘To Abraham and his seed were the promises made’ (Galatians 3:16). Abraham himself was to share the inheritance. The fulfillment of God’s promise may seem to be long delayed—for ‘one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day’ (2 Peter 3:8); it may appear to tarry; but at the appointed time ‘it will surely come, it will not tarry’ (Habakkuk 2:3). The gift to Abraham and his seed included not merely the land of Canaan, but the whole earth.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 169, 170.

- b. What shows that the patriarchs understood this? Hebrews 11:13–16.
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- c. Who are considered to be true descendants of Abraham, and thus the heirs of the promise? Galatians 3:27–29; Matthew 8:11, 12.
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“Christ recognized no virtue in lineage. He taught that spiritual connection supersedes all natural connection. . . . Only those who prove themselves to be spiritually in harmony with Abraham by obeying the voice of God are reckoned as of true descent.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 268.

5. A GLORIOUS INHERITANCE

- a. What state will the earth be in when the promise is fulfilled? Isaiah 65:17–19.

“In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called ‘a country’ (Hebrews 11:14–16). There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God’s people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

- b. How does Scripture describe the spiritual unity of the inherited kingdom? Jeremiah 23:3–6; Ezekiel 37:24–27.

“One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. . . . 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.”—*Ibid.*, p. 678.

- c. When the earth is made new, what will God do with His place of dwelling? Revelation 21:1–3.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When God makes a promise, how can its fulfillment depend on conditions?
2. What is needed besides a profession of faith in Christ?
3. What makes someone a real child of Abraham?
4. When will the promise of inheriting the land be fulfilled?
5. What will be the attitude of the saved in the New Earth?

The Mystery of Iniquity

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

“The apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, foretold the great apostasy which would result in the establishment of the papal power. . . . Even at that early date he saw, creeping into the church, errors that would prepare the way for the development of the papacy.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 49.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 49–60.

Sunday

October 25

1. DANGER TO THE FLOCK

- a. What danger did Jesus warn that the church would face? Matthew 24:4, 5, 11. What would eventually develop? Acts 20:28–30; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12.
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“Within a few brief years many of those who had stood as teachers and leaders in the church were to lay down their lives for the gospel. Soon grievous wolves were to enter in, not sparing the flock. But none of these things were to bring discouragement to those whose hopes were centered in Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 528.

- b. What could the church do about this danger? 2 Timothy 3:13–15; Romans 16:17, 18.
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“Paul trembled for the church as, looking into the future, he saw the attacks which she must suffer from both external and internal foes. With solemn earnestness he bade his brethren guard vigilantly their sacred trust.”—*Ibid.*, p. 395.

2. THE THREAT OF PERSECUTION

- a. **What did the unbelieving Jews do to their Christian countrymen? 1 Thessalonians 2:14–16; Acts 14:2. What happened as a result of persecution? Acts 8:1, 4.**
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“The work of proclaiming the gospel message among the Gentiles was now to be prosecuted with vigor; and as a result the church was to be strengthened by a great ingathering of souls. The apostles who had been appointed to lead out in this work would be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. Their teachings concerning the breaking down of ‘the middle wall of partition’ (Ephesians 2:14) that had so long separated the Jewish and the Gentile world, would naturally subject them to the charge of heresy.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 161.

“If those who know the truth would practice it, methods would be devised for meeting the people where they are. It was the providence of God which in the beginning of the Christian church scattered the saints abroad, sending them out of Jerusalem into many parts of the world. The disciples of Christ did not stay in Jerusalem or in the cities near by, but they went beyond the limits of their own country into the great thoroughfares of travel, seeking for the lost that they might bring them to God. Today the Lord desires to see His work carried forward in many places. We must not confine our labors to a few localities.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 330.

- b. **Was this persecution something they should expect? John 15:20; 2 Timothy 3:12. What happens to cause a person to lose his or her faith in the face of persecution? Mark 4:16, 17.**
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- c. **How should we respond to persecution? Matthew 5:10–12; Romans 8:37–39.**
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“[Matthew 5:10–12 quoted]. Jesus here shows [His disciples] that at the very time when they are experiencing great suffering in His cause, they have reason to be glad and recognize that their afflictions are profitable to them, having an influence to wean their affections from the world and concentrate them upon Heaven.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 211, 212.

3. JUDAIZING TEACHERS

- a. How did the fear of persecution continue to affect some church members? Acts 15:1, 2.

“While the apostles united with the ministers and lay members at Antioch in an earnest effort to win many souls to Christ, certain Jewish believers from Judea ‘of the sect of the Pharisees’ succeeded in introducing a question that soon led to widespread controversy in the church and brought consternation to the believing Gentiles. With great assurance these Judaizing teachers asserted that in order to be saved, one must be circumcised and must keep the entire ceremonial law. . . .

“The Jewish converts generally were not inclined to move as rapidly as the providence of God opened the way. From the result of the apostles’ labors among the Gentiles it was evident that the converts among the latter people would far exceed the Jewish converts in number. The Jews feared that if the restrictions and ceremonies of their law were not made obligatory upon the Gentiles as a condition of church fellowship, the national peculiarities of the Jews, which had hitherto kept them distinct from all other people, would finally disappear from among those who received the gospel message.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188, 189.

- b. What was the spirit behind these movements? Galatians 6:12–16. What qualities will a true Christian reveal in situations like this? 2 Timothy 1:7.
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- c. How did the apostle Paul meet the heresy in his letters? Romans 2:25–29; 1 Corinthians 7:18, 19; Galatians 5:6.
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“Paul had dedicated himself and all his powers to the service of God. He had received the truths of the gospel direct from heaven, and throughout his ministry he maintained a vital connection with heavenly agencies. He had been taught by God regarding the binding of unnecessary burdens upon the Gentile Christians; thus when the Judaizing believers introduced into the Antioch church the question of circumcision, Paul knew the mind of the Spirit of God concerning such teaching and took a firm and unyielding position which brought to the churches freedom from Jewish rites and ceremonies.”—*Ibid.*, p. 200.

4. COURAGE AND COMPROMISE

- a. Like the apostle Paul, what spirit should we have? Galatians 6:14; Romans 1:14–17.
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- b. What compromise was the great apostle persuaded by his brethren to make, and how did it lead to his arrest? Acts 21:17–24; 26–30.
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“The brethren hoped that Paul, by following the course suggested, might give a decisive contradiction to the false reports concerning him. They assured him that the decision of the former council concerning the Gentile converts and the ceremonial law, still held good. But the advice now given was not consistent with that decision. The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem knew that by non-conformity to the ceremonial law, Christians would bring upon themselves the hatred of the Jews and expose themselves to persecution. . . . Should the believers in Christ be condemned before the Sanhedrin as breakers of the law, they would suffer swift and severe punishment as apostates from the Jewish faith.

“Many of the Jews who had accepted the gospel still cherished a regard for the ceremonial law and were only too willing to make unwise concessions, hoping thus to gain the confidence of their countrymen, to remove their prejudice, and to win them to faith in Christ as the world’s Redeemer. Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the church at Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. . . . But he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked.

“When we think of Paul’s great desire to be in harmony with his brethren, his tenderness toward the weak in the faith, his reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord, and his purpose to become all things to all men so far as he could without sacrificing principle—when we think of all this, it is less surprising that he was constrained to deviate from the firm, decided course that he had hitherto followed. But instead of accomplishing the desired object, his efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, hastened his predicted sufferings, and resulted in separating him from his brethren, depriving the church of one of its strongest pillars, and bringing sorrow to Christian hearts in every land.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 404–406.

5. THE MYSTERY DEVELOPED

- a. After the revolt of the Jews from the rule of Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, how did the focus change among compromising Christians? Revelation 2:2–4.

“Early in the history of the church the mystery of iniquity foretold by the apostle Paul began its baleful work; and as the false teachers concerning whom Peter had warned the believers, urged their heresies, many were ensnared by false doctrines.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 587.

“What was the origin of the great apostasy? How did the church first depart from the simplicity of the gospel? By conforming to the practices of paganism, to facilitate the acceptance of Christianity by the heathen.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 384.

- b. Discuss how the popular contempt of the Jews throughout the Roman empire contributed to the decline in the observance of the Sabbath.

“In the first centuries the true Sabbath had been kept by all Christians. . . . But with great subtlety Satan worked through his agents to bring about his object. That the attention of the people might be called to the Sunday, it was made a festival in honor of the resurrection of Christ. . . .

“Now, taking advantage of the false light in which he had thus caused [the Sabbath] to be regarded, [Satan] cast contempt upon it as a Jewish institution. While Christians generally continued to observe the Sunday as a joyous festival, he led them, in order to show their hatred of Judaism, to make the Sabbath a fast, a day of sadness and gloom.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What spirit was the root of the development of the mystery of iniquity?
2. How will a truly converted person respond to the threat of persecution?
3. Explain the issues surrounding the first doctrinal controversy in the early Christian church.
4. What prompted the advice given to Paul when he was in Jerusalem? Why?
5. How does the mystery of iniquity still insinuate itself into the church today?

First Sabbath Offering Literature for Mission Fields

In the 21st century, while the Internet, e-books, and other media are modern ways to spread the gospel, there is still a uniquely versatile method of presentation that no other media type can replace: The printed page is one of the most effective ways for the gospel to reach even the remotest places on earth—without elec-



tricity. By this means the good news is penetrating former communist, atheistic, and Islamic countries and can be shared on a one-to-one basis. The servant of the Lord has said: “Let the publications containing Bible truth be scattered like the leaves of autumn” (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 323). “Our publications should go everywhere. Let them be issued in many languages. The third angel’s message is to be given through this medium and through the living teacher. You who believe the truth for this time, wake up. It is your duty now to bring in all the means possible to help those who understand the truth to proclaim it” (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 62).

“Publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:7). God’s people, the remnant of Israel, are to publish the good news of salvation. While we have an ample supply of Bibles, books, and pamphlets for evangelism in many countries, still there are vast multitudes around the world that do not have the same privilege. It is our duty and honor to support the distribution of literature to various regions of the world. The Bible has been translated into many languages and dialects, yet essential books such as *Steps to Christ*, and *The Great Controversy* are not available to millions. How about if we share *Sabbath Bible Lessons* with those who are searching for the present truth today?

Consider the Pacific islands and the African countries where the reform message has not yet entered. Let us remember the promise in Ecclesiastes 11:1, “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.” We must spread the Word of God before it is too late. We may not see the results immediately, but it will not be long before we can witness the great harvest when the latter rain comes in fullness. Let us be wise stewards who store treasure in heaven—not on this earth.

We are very thankful for all that our brethren, sisters, and friends everywhere have done in the past—but the need is greater now than ever before. So let us be generous in this work!

The General Conference Publishing Department

The Sabbath in the Last Days

“Hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God” (Ezekiel 20:20).

“In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man is to be repaired.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 433–450.

Sunday

November 1

1. REMEMBER?

- a. What expression in Exodus 20:8 shows that the Sabbath day was being kept before God spoke and wrote the Decalogue at Sinai?

“The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. It is to be remembered and observed as the memorial of the Creator’s work.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 307.

- b. What did God do on the seventh day of creation? Genesis 2:1, 2. What was special about this day? Genesis 2:3.

“Like the Sabbath, the week originated at creation, and it has been preserved and brought down to us through Bible history. God Himself measured off the first week as a sample for successive weeks to the close of time. Like every other, it consisted of seven literal days. Six days were employed in the work of creation; upon the seventh, God rested, and He then blessed this day and set it apart as a day of rest for man.”—*Ibid.*, p. 111.

“Because He had rested upon the Sabbath, ‘God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it’ (Genesis 2:3),—set it apart to a holy use. He gave it to Adam as a day of rest. It was a memorial of the work of creation, and thus a sign of God’s power and His love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 281.

2. A MEMORIAL OF CREATION

a. What is the Sabbath to remind us of? Exodus 20:11; Psalm 111:4.

“Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, [the Sabbath] distinguishes the true God from all false gods. All who keep the seventh day signify by this act that they are worshipers of Jehovah. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of man’s allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 307.

“God designs that the Sabbath shall direct the minds of men to the contemplation of His created works. Nature speaks to their senses, declaring that there is a living God, the Creator, the Supreme Ruler of all. . . . The beauty that clothes the earth is a token of God’s love. We may behold it in the everlasting hills, in the lofty trees, in the opening buds and the delicate flowers. All speak to us of God. The Sabbath, ever pointing to Him who made them all, bids men open the great book of nature and trace therein the wisdom, the power, and the love of the Creator.”—*Ibid.*, p. 48.

b. If God made all things, what position does that place us in? Psalm 100:3; Ephesians 2:10.

c. Who is the Creator to whom the Sabbath belongs? John 1:3; Mark 2:27, 28.

“Because the Sabbath was made for man, it is the Lord’s day. It belongs to Christ. For ‘all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made’ (John 1:3). Since He made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier. It declares that He who created all things in heaven and in earth, and by whom all things hold together, is the head of the church, and that by His power we are reconciled to God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 288.

“The fourth commandment is the only one of all the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It is the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus it contains the seal of God, affixed to His law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 307.

3. A SIGN OF SANCTIFICATION

- a. What additional purpose did the Sabbath serve after sin entered the world? Ezekiel 20:12.

“The Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 288.

- b. Of what was the Sabbath especially a reminder to the children of Israel? Deuteronomy 5:15.

- c. How are the themes of “enmity” against sin and deliverance from it reflected in the meaning of the Sabbath? Genesis 3:15; Exodus 31:13.

“It is the work of conversion and sanctification to reconcile men to God by bringing them into accord with the principles of His law. . . . ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be’ (Romans 8:7). But ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son,’ that man might be reconciled to God. Through the merits of Christ he can be restored to harmony with his Maker. His heart must be renewed by divine grace; he must have a new life from above. This change is the new birth, without which, says Jesus, ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

“The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier. The power that created all things is the power that re-creates the soul in His own likeness. To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character. And the Sabbath is the sign of obedience. He who from the heart obeys the fourth commandment will obey the whole law. He is sanctified through obedience.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 350.

“All who cherish the Lord as their portion in this life will be under His control and will receive the sign, the mark of God, which shows them to be God’s special possession. Christ’s righteousness will go before them and the glory of the Lord will be their reward. The Lord protects every human being who bears His sign.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 969.

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF TRUE SABBATHKEEPING

- a. What does true Sabbathkeeping involve in these final days of earth's history? Matthew 11:28–30; Ephesians 4:22–24.
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“Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. 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’ (Psalm 46:10). Here alone can true rest be found. . . . Amid the hurrying throng and the strain of life’s intense activities, the soul that is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

- b. What is the result of the process of renewal? 2 Corinthians 5:17.
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- c. To truly keep the Sabbath holy, in what spiritual condition must we be? Leviticus 20:26; Ephesians 1:3, 4.
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- d. What should we earnestly seek for daily? Psalm 51:10.
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“The very first reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. Never a prayer is offered, however faltering, never a tear is shed, however secret, never a sincere desire after God is cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 206.

“Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.’ This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

5. A DELIGHT AND A JOY

- a. If we receive the Sabbath covenant, and it does the intended work in us, what will it become? Isaiah 58:13, 14. What is meant by the words “My holy day”? Matthew 12:8.
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- b. What blessing will the Sabbath bring to all who truly receive it? Matthew 11:28.
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“To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 289.

“All heaven was represented to me as beholding and watching upon the Sabbath those who acknowledge the claims of the fourth commandment and are observing the Sabbath. Angels were marking their interest in, and high regard for, this divine institution. Those who sanctified the Lord God in their hearts by a strictly devotional frame of mind, and who sought to improve the sacred hours in keeping the Sabbath to the best of their ability, and to honor God by calling the Sabbath a delight—these the angels were specially blessing with light and health, and special strength was given them.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 704, 705.

- c. If we are found faithful, what will we be doing every Sabbath in the kingdom on the earth made new? Isaiah 66:23.
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PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the reasons why God said “remember.”
2. What things does the Sabbath remind us of?
3. What other significance does the Sabbath have in the Christian’s experience?
4. How may we truly experience Sabbath rest?
5. How are you benefiting from the blessings of the Lord’s day?

The Investigative Judgment

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” (1 Timothy 5:24).

“While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth.”—*Maranatha*, p. 254.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 479–491.

Sunday

November 8

1. YOUR CASE PENDING

- a. Who has a case pending in judgment? 2 Corinthians 5:10. With whom does it begin? 1 Peter 4:17.

“As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 483.

- b. When are most people judged? Hebrews 9:27. Why?

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- c. On what evidence is the judgment based? Revelation 20:11, 12. What is recorded in the books? Jeremiah 2:22; Malachi 3:16; Nehemiah 13:14.
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2. THE STANDARD AND THE ADVOCATE

- a. **What is the standard by which we are to be judged? James 2:10–12. What is the character of this standard, and what does it require? Psalm 19:7; Matthew 5:48.**
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“The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 482.

“In His teachings, Christ showed how far-reaching are the principles of the law spoken from Sinai. He made a living application of that law whose principles remain forever the great standard of righteousness—the standard by which all shall be judged in that great day when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 211.

- b. **What is the penalty for unrighteousness? Romans 6:23. Is there any hope for one with a bad record? 1 John 2:1, 2.**
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“The death of the spotless Son of God testifies that ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Romans 6:23), that every violation of God’s law must receive its just retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father’s face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed. In no other way could man be freed from the penalty of sin.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 540.

- c. **How are we to receive the propitiation? Romans 3:25; 1 John 1:9.**
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“The examples in God’s word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification. Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in its darkest hue, not attempting to lessen his guilt. . . .

“The humble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will appreciate something of the love of God and the cost of Calvary; and as a son confesses to a loving father, so will the truly penitent bring all his sins before God. And it is written, ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9).”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 41.

3. TIME OF THE JUDGMENT

- a. **What will happen to those who have truly accepted the Advocate?** John 11:25; John 5:24–29.
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“All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 483.

- b. **When Jesus returns, what will He bring with Him, and what does He do with it?** Revelation 22:12; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.
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- c. **What must happen first in order that Christ may reward the faithful?** 1 Timothy 5:24; 1 Peter 4:17; Luke 20:35, 36.
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“Before the final reward is given, it must be decided who are fitted to share the inheritance of the righteous. This decision must be made prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; for when He comes, His reward is with Him, ‘to give every man according as his work shall be’ (Revelation 22:12). Before His coming, then, the character of every man’s work will have been determined, and to every one of Christ’s followers the reward will have been apportioned according to his deeds.

“It is while men are still dwelling upon the earth that the work of investigative judgment takes place in the courts of heaven. The lives of all His professed followers pass in review before God. All are examined according to the record of the books of heaven, and according to his deeds the destiny of each is forever fixed.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 310.

“There will be no future probation in which to prepare for eternity. It is in this life that we are to put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness. This is our only opportunity to form characters for the home which Christ has made ready for those who obey His commandments.”—*Ibid*, p. 319.

4. THE BLOTTING OUT OF SINS

- a. **What will have happened to the sins of the righteous who receive their reward at the resurrection? Micah 7:19; Isaiah 43:25.**
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“The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sins is to be accomplished before the second advent of the Lord. Since the dead are to be judged out of the things written in the books, it is impossible that the sins of men should be blotted out until after the judgment at which their cases are to be investigated. But the apostle Peter distinctly states that the sins of believers will be blotted out ‘when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ’ (Acts 3:19, 20). When the investigative judgment closes, Christ will come, and His reward will be with Him to give to every man as his work shall be.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 485.

- b. **Explain how the parable of the unjust servant (Matthew 18:23–35) shows the difference between forgiveness and blotting out. Although we may be faithful today, what sobering reality should keep us ever vigilant? Ezekiel 33:13–16.**
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- c. **What happens to the name of an unfaithful person, written in the book of life? Exodus 32:32, 33. How is a name written there in the first place, and whose names will be retained? Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5.**
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“We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. . . . Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 489, 490.

5. EXAMINATION AND REWARD

- a. In order for sins to be blotted out, what must happen first, as described in the parable of the man without a wedding garment? Matthew 22:9–14. What is symbolized by the wedding garment? Revelation 19:8; Philippians 3:9.

“By the king’s examination of the guests at the [wedding] feast is represented a work of judgment. The guests at the gospel feast are those who profess to serve God, those whose names are written in the book of life. . . .

“By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ’s true followers will possess. . . . It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 310.

- b. What work is Christ doing for each repenting sinner now, and what pronouncement will be made when that work is done? Hebrews 2:17; Revelation 22:11, 12; Daniel 12:1.

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- c. Since the judgment concludes with the final generation who are judged while living, what is Jesus’ warning to us? Mark 13:33. What assurance do we have? Hebrews 4:14–16; 13:20, 21.

“The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. . . . Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 490.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is the time of judgment such a solemn time in which to live?
2. How can we be sure to be judged “not guilty”?
3. Why must the judgment of professed believers happen before the Second Coming?
4. What is the distinction between forgiveness and blotting out of sins?
5. What experience must Christ’s true followers have who will be judged while living?

Earth's Final Warning

“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3, 4).

“The advent movement of 1840-44 was a glorious manifestation of the power of God; the first angel’s message was carried to every missionary station in the world, and in some countries there was the greatest religious interest which has been witnessed in any land since the Reformation of the sixteenth century; but these are to be exceeded by the mighty movement under the last warning of the third angel.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 611.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603–612.

Sunday

November 15

1. EVERYONE MUST KNOW

a. **What important commission did Jesus give to His disciples? Acts 1:8.**

“Before ascending to heaven, Christ gave His disciples their commission. He told them that they were to be the executors of the will in which He bequeathed to the world the treasures of eternal life. . . .

“They were not to wait for the people to come to them; they were to go to the people with their message.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 27, 28.

b. **What must take place before the end of the world? Matthew 24:14.**

“It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69.

2. PROPHECIES OF DESTRUCTION

- a. Why is Jesus' coming delayed, and what is in store for this earth, as we know it? 2 Peter 3:7–10.
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- b. Describe the prophecies of destruction in the dramatic climax of this earth's history. Isaiah 13:6–9; 34:1–5; Revelation 6:14–17; 11:18.
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“God permits the wicked to prosper and to reveal their enmity against Him, that when they shall have filled up the measure of their iniquity all may see His justice and mercy in their utter destruction. The day of His vengeance hastens, when all who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people will meet the just recompense of their deeds; when every act of cruelty or injustice toward God's faithful ones will be punished as though done to Christ Himself.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 48.

- c. How does this parallel the Flood in the days of Noah? Genesis 6:13, 17; 7:23; Matthew 24:37–41.
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“The Bible declares that in the last days men will be absorbed in worldly pursuits, in pleasure and money-getting. They will be blind to eternal realities. . . .

“Men are rushing on in the chase for gain and selfish indulgence as if there were no God, no heaven, and no hereafter. In Noah's day the warning of the flood was sent to startle men in their wickedness and call them to repentance. So the message of Christ's soon coming is designed to arouse men from their absorption in worldly things. It is intended to awaken them to a sense of eternal realities, that they may give heed to the invitation to the Lord's table.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 228.

“Before the Flood God sent Noah to warn the world, that the people might be led to repentance, and thus escape the threatened destruction. As the time of Christ's second appearing draws near, the Lord sends His servants with a warning to the world to prepare for that great event. Multitudes have been living in transgression of God's law, and now He in mercy calls them to obey its sacred precepts. All who will put away their sins by repentance toward God and faith in Christ are offered pardon.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 102.

3. THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

- a. How does Revelation describe the actual carrying out of God's judgments on the earth? Revelation 15:7; 16:1–21.
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"I saw that [God's] anger was dreadful and terrible, and if He should stretch forth His hand, or lift it in anger, the inhabitants of the world would be as though they had never been, or would suffer from incurable sores and withering plagues that would come upon them, and they would find no deliverance, but be destroyed by them. . . . Then I realized, as never before, the importance of searching the Word of God carefully, to know how to escape the plagues which that Word declares shall come on all the ungodly."—*Early Writings*, pp. 64, 65.

"Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God or be cut down by the destroying weapons. Already a few drops of God's wrath have fallen upon the earth; but when the seven last plagues shall be poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, then it will be forever too late to repent and find shelter. No atoning blood will then wash away the stains of sin."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 212.

- b. Describe the scene when the destruction of the rest of the living is finished. Revelation 19:17–19.
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"My attention was again directed to the earth. . . . After the saints had been delivered by the voice of God, the wicked multitude turned their rage upon one another. The earth seemed to be deluged with blood, and dead bodies were from one end of it to the other.

"The earth looked like a desolate wilderness. Cities and villages, shaken down by the earthquake, lay in heaps. Mountains had been moved out of their places, leaving large caverns. Ragged rocks, thrown out by the sea, or torn out of the earth itself, were scattered all over its surface. Large trees had been uprooted and were strewn over the land."—*Early Writings*, pp. 289, 290.

- c. At the culmination of the destruction of the earth, what is the last event? Malachi 4:1–3; 2 Peter 3:10.
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4. A THREEFOLD MESSAGE

- a. How are the judgment and the fall of spiritual Babylon described by the first and second angels of Revelation 14? Revelation 14:6–8.
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“In the prophecy this warning of the judgment, with its connected messages, is followed by the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. The proclamation of the judgment is an announcement of Christ’s second coming as at hand. And this proclamation is called the everlasting gospel. Thus the preaching of Christ’s second coming, the announcement of its nearness, is shown to be an essential part of the gospel message.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 227, 228.

- b. How does the third angel present the final warning before the seven last plagues? Revelation 14:9–12.
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“The most fearful threatening ever addressed to mortals is contained in the third angel’s message. That must be a terrible sin which calls down the wrath of God unmingled with mercy. Men are not to be left in darkness concerning this important matter; the warning against this sin is to be given to the world before the visitation of God’s judgments, that all may know why they are to be inflicted and have opportunity to escape them.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 449, 450.

- c. Who is represented by these “angels” (messengers) that “preach” the everlasting gospel to the people of the earth? Mark 16:15.
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“The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God’s messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth. Christ declares to His followers: ‘Ye are the light of the world’ (Matthew 5:14). To every soul that accepts Jesus the cross of Calvary speaks: ‘Behold the worth of the soul: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Nothing is to be permitted to hinder this work. It is the all-important work for time; it is to be far-reaching as eternity. The love that Jesus manifested for the souls of men in the sacrifice which He made for their redemption will actuate all His followers.’”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 456.

5. THE FINAL CALL

- a. **Just prior to the plagues, what special call is repeated to God’s faithful who are not yet united with the remnant church? Revelation 18:1–5.**
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“Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion. . . .

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6–12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

- b. **In order for the earth to be “lightened with his glory,” what characteristics must the angel (messenger) exhibit? Isaiah 52:7, 8; Matthew 5:16; Colossians 1:27.**
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- c. **What action plan does the apostle present to us in view of these realities? 1 Thessalonians 5:4–6.**
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PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the urgent task which the Lord has left in our hands?
2. How do the condition and the destiny of earth today parallel those of Noah’s time?
3. Describe how God will bring this present world to an end.
4. What warning is to be given before the complete destruction of the earth?
5. How can we be sure to be on God’s side in the times ahead?

God's Servants Sealed

“Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Revelation 7:3).

“Satan is now using every device in this sealing time to keep the minds of God’s people from the present, sealing truth and to cause them to waver. I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of Almighty God.”—*The Review and Herald (The Present Truth)*, August 1, 1849.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 207–216.

Sunday

November 22

1. A REFUGE

- a. What invitation does God make to His people before the destruction of the earth? Isaiah 26:20, 21.

- b. What promises will be a comfort in those turbulent days? Psalm 46:1–3; 91:1–10.

“The time of trouble is the crucible that is to bring out Christlike characters. It is designed to lead the people of God to renounce Satan and his temptations. The last conflict will reveal Satan to them in his true character, that of a cruel tyrant, and it will do for them what nothing else could do, uproot him entirely from their affections.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 12, 1884.

“[God’s people’s] faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is: ‘I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me’ (Genesis 32:26).”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 619, 620.

2. SEALED OR SLAIN

- a. Who is destroyed, and who is given shelter in Ezekiel's vision? Ezekiel 9:3–6, 9, 10.
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- b. How is the work of the protecting angels cited in the Revelation similar to that of the man with the writer's inkhorn in Ezekiel's vision? Revelation 7:1–3.
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- c. How does the experience of the Jews in the time of Esther illustrate that of God's people at the end of time? Esther 3:8, 9; 9:1–3.
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“This sealing of the servants of God is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 445.

“The trying experiences that came to God's people in the days of Esther were not peculiar to that age alone. . . . The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. . . .

“The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the true church see in the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment, a Mordecai at the gate. The reverence of God's people for His law is a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling on His Sabbath.

“Satan will arouse indignation against the minority who refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius, education will combine to cover them with contempt. Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, men will stir up the passions of the people. Not having a ‘Thus saith the Scriptures’ to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for Sunday laws. . . . On this battlefield will be fought the last great conflict in the controversy between truth and error. And we are not left in doubt as to the issue. Today, as in the days of Esther and Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate His truth and His people.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 605, 606.

3. PURIFICATION OF CHARACTER

- a. **What type of character will be developed in those who are preparing for the seal? Revelation 14:1, 5. What does having the Father's name imply? Matthew 6:9; 1 Peter 3:15.**

“Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 216.

“It is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so [God's people] cannot be moved.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1161.

“Are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us—the perfection of His character? When the Lord's people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

“I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

- b. **How will the Lord perform this sanctifying work in us? Hebrews 7:25; 13:20, 21; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.**

“I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished and that time can last but a very little longer. What leisure time we have should be spent in searching the Bible, which is to judge us in the last day. . . .

“Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man. The sealing time is very short and will soon be over. Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure.”—*Early Writings*, p. 58.

“Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905.

4. SIGHING AND CRYING

a. What is the work of God's people in the last days? Isaiah 58:12.

"In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man is to be repaired. God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678.

b. What does it mean to sigh and cry? Ezekiel 9:4.

"The abominations for which the faithful ones were sighing and crying were all that could be discerned by finite eyes, but by far the worst sins, those which provoked the jealousy of the pure and holy God, were unrevealed."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 211.

"At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world. . . .

"They mourn before God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church."—*Ibid.*, pp. 209, 210.

c. Where does the judgment begin, and what does this mean for God's professed people? Ezekiel 9:6.

"But the general slaughter of all those who do not thus see the wide contrast between sin and righteousness, and do not feel as those do who stand in the counsel of God and receive the mark, is described in the order to the five men with slaughter weapons: [Ezekiel 9:5, 6 quoted]."—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 267.

5. DELIVERANCE

- a. How will God finally deliver His people in this time? Luke 18:7; Daniel 12:1, 2. Discuss the purification of the church prior to the close of probation.

“In the hour of the church’s greatest danger most fervent prayer will be offered in her behalf by the faithful remnant, and God will hear and answer at the very time when the guilt of the transgressor has reached its height.” *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 524.

“The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 380.

“The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. . . . In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. . . . Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ’s righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 81.

- b. Who will survive the plagues and be translated at the second coming of Jesus? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Revelation 14:4.

“None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience . . . such as no other company have ever had. . . . These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as ‘the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb’ (Revelation 14:4).”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 649.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What protection does God offer from the plagues, and how can you have it?
2. How are we to be brought to the condition of readiness for the seal?
3. How do the remnant relate to the sin around them, in and out of the church?
4. Have you felt the personal assurance of God’s promise to prepare you for the end?
5. How does God’s vision of the wheat and the chaff differ from ours?

First Sabbath Offering for the “Bethel Project” in Peru

Peru is a country located in the western part of South America. Its capital is the metropolitan city of Lima. The number of inhabitants in 2015 rose to over 31 million. With reference to South America, Peru ranks fourth in population after Brazil, Colombia, and Argentina.

The message of Reformation came to Peru in the year 1930. Today, the Peruvian Union has approximately 3,000 members.

In November of 2012, by the grace of God, 50 acres of land were deeded to us in the province of San Miguel, Cajamarca. The property is situated 29 km from the city of Chépén, 700 km north of Lima. It is 430 meters above sea level and a place characterized by fertile land, abundant vegetation, and mild climate.

The Peruvian Union has planned for a short, medium, and long-range term of activities to take place on this property, under the name the “Bethel Project.” This project will include: a sanitarium, a missionary school, campgrounds for conferences and congresses, a technological institute that may develop into a university, organic farming, and beekeeping.

The Lord’s messenger counsels us that, especially in these last days, our families and our institutions should be located outside the cities in order to preserve physical, moral, and spiritual health. This counsel has been an inspiration to us in the fulfillment of this project.

So far two brothers have been working on the property. They have fenced the property, completed the excavation for a water well, and purchased a pump. They are now making bricks for the buildings, and the work with other heavy machinery continues. At the same time the apiary is being established and fruit trees are being planted.

Though we have been praying for help and raising funds among our local workers, brothers, sisters, and friends, the financial investment required to complete the project is still very large. For this reason we now appeal to our dear brothers and sisters around the world to give heartily to this project.

We thank you in advance for your liberal offering and wish you the richest blessings of heaven.

Your brethren and sisters from Peru



The Second Coming of Christ

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3).

“The truth that Christ is coming should be kept before every mind.”—*Evangelism*, p. 220.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 640–646.

Sunday

November 29

1. “I WILL COME AGAIN”

- a. **What was Jesus’ promise, before His death? John 14:1–3. In what manner did he ascend, and how will this be matched in His return? Acts 1:9–11.**
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“The promise of Christ’s second coming was ever to be kept fresh in the minds of His disciples. The same Jesus whom they had seen ascending into heaven, would come again, to take to Himself those who here below give themselves to His service. The same voice that had said to them, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end’ (Matthew 28:20), would bid them welcome to His presence in the heavenly kingdom.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 33.

- b. **Although the world is full of scoffers, what is the hope of the Christian? 2 Peter 3:3, 4; Titus 2:13.**
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“Peter was inspired to outline conditions that would exist in the world just prior to the second coming of Christ. . . . As the end of all things earthly should approach, there would be faithful ones able to discern the signs of the times. While a large number of professing believers would deny their faith by their works, there would be a remnant who would endure to the end.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 535, 536.

2. SHAKING THE HEAVENS

- a. Describe the manner of Jesus' coming. Revelation 1:7; Luke 21:26.

“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. . . . With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands' (Revelation 5:11). No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. . . . As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 640, 641.

“The derisive jests have ceased. Lying lips are hushed into silence. The clash of arms, the tumult of battle, ‘with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood’ (Isaiah 9:5), is stilled. Nought now is heard but the voice of prayer and the sound of weeping and lamentation. The cry bursts forth from lips so lately scoffing: ‘The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?’ (Revelation 6:17). The wicked pray to be buried beneath the rocks of the mountains rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected.”—*Ibid.*, p. 642.

- b. How does the vision of John in Revelation 6:12–17 confirm other Old Testament prophecies? Isaiah 2:10, 11, 19; 34:4, 8; Joel 3:14–16.

“Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent. The Saviour has warned His people against deception upon this point and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. . . . This coming there is no possibility of counterfeiting. It will be universally known—witnessed by the whole world.”—*Ibid.*, p. 625.

3. THE FIRST RESSURECTION

- a. **Amidst the shaking of heaven and earth, what will Jesus do? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; John 5:25; 1 Corinthians 15:51–53.**
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“Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: ‘Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!’ Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying: ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ (1 Corinthians 15:55). And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 644.

- b. **What will happen to those who have died in faithful expectation of Christ’s coming? John 11:25, 26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14.**
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“All come forth from their graves the same in stature as when they entered the tomb. . . . All arise with the freshness and vigor of eternal youth. In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature. Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had been lost. He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave. Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will ‘grow up’ (Malachi 4:2) to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory. The last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ’s faithful ones will appear in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God’ (Psalm 90:17), in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord. . . .

“Angels ‘gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other’ (Matthew 24:31). Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers’ arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 644, 645.

4. TAKEN OR LEFT?

- a. To what times in biblical history does Jesus compare His second coming? Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:28.

“Men have taken upon themselves the responsibility of erecting a standard in harmony with their own ideas, and the law of Jehovah has been dishonored. This is why there is so great and widespread iniquity. This is why our days are becoming like the days of Noah and Lot.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 2, 1893.

- b. What was the result of God’s judgments on both of these occasions? Genesis 7:21–23; 19:24, 25.

- c. In the same way, what will happen at Christ’s coming? Luke 17:34–37.

“When the reasoning of philosophy has banished the fear of God’s judgments; when religious teachers are pointing forward to long ages of peace and prosperity, and the world are absorbed in their rounds of business and pleasure, planting and building, feasting and merrymaking, rejecting God’s warnings and mocking His messengers—then it is that sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 104.

- d. Explain who are those that will be “taken” at the second coming of Christ. Matthew 24:40–42; Malachi 3:17.

“The time of the judgment is a most solemn period, when the Lord gathers His own from among the tares. Those who have been members of the same family are separated. A mark is placed upon the righteous. . . . Those who have been obedient to God’s commandments will unite with the company of the saints in light; they shall enter in through the gates into the city and have right to the tree of life. The one shall be taken. His name shall stand in the book of life, while those with whom he associated shall have the mark of eternal separation from God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 234, 235.

5. ARE YOU READY?

- a. What happens to the wicked who are alive when Christ comes? 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9; 2:8; Psalm 97:3.
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- b. What will the wicked become for the “eagles” mentioned by Jesus in Luke 17:37? Revelation 19:17, 18; Ezekiel 39:17–20.
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- c. Knowing what is ahead, what should our focus be? 2 Peter 3:11; Psalm 24:3, 4; Jude 23, 24.
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“Jesus is coming, but not as at His first advent, a babe in Bethlehem; not as He rode into Jerusalem, when the disciples praised God with a loud voice and cried, ‘Hosanna’; but in the glory of the Father and with all the retinue of holy angels to escort Him on His way to earth. All heaven will be emptied of the angels, while the waiting saints will be looking for Him and gazing into heaven, as were the men of Galilee when He ascended from the Mount of Olivet. Then only those who are holy, those who have followed fully the meek Pattern, will with rapturous joy exclaim as they behold Him, ‘Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us’ (Isaiah 25:9).”—*Early Writings*, p. 110.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What assurance did Jesus give of His return?
2. How will you discern the false claims regarding the nature of Christ’s second coming from the truth which He taught?
3. Describe the order of events from the time Jesus appears in the clouds to the time when the saints join Him in His return to heaven.
4. Do you want to be “taken” or “left behind” when Jesus returns?
5. How can you be sure to be one of Christ’s waiting ones?

The Last Enemy

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26).

“Pain cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven. There will be no more tears, no funeral trains, no badges of mourning.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 531–550.

Sunday

December 6

1. DEATH'S ORIGIN AND THE FIRST GREAT LIE

- a. **With what was the first biblical mention of death associated? Genesis 2:17. What lie was told by the serpent in a conversation that took place at this tree? Genesis 3:1–4.**

“The only one who promised Adam life in disobedience was the great deceiver. And the declaration of the serpent to Eve in Eden—‘Ye shall not surely die’ (Genesis 3:4)—was the first sermon ever preached upon the immortality of the soul. Yet this declaration, resting solely upon the authority of Satan, is echoed from the pulpits of Christendom and is received by the majority of mankind as readily as it was received by our first parents. The divine sentence, ‘The soul that sinneth, it shall die’ (Ezekiel 18:20), is made to mean: The soul that sinneth, it shall not die, but live eternally. We cannot but wonder at the strange infatuation which renders men so credulous concerning the words of Satan and so unbelieving in regard to the words of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 533.

- b. **When faced with temptation to eat from this tree, what did the first pair do? Genesis 3:6. What came as a result of this sin? Romans 5:12; 6:23.**

“It is now evident to all that the wages of sin is not noble independence and eternal life, but slavery, ruin, and death.”—*Ibid.*, p. 668.

2. THE NATURE OF DEATH

- a. How did God bring body and breath together to give life to the first person? Genesis 2:7. What happens when a soul dies? Psalm 146:4.
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- b. What control does a person have over death, and what state does one enter upon dying? Psalm 6:5; 89:48; 115:17; Ecclesiastes 8:8; 9:5.
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“Upon the fundamental error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death—a doctrine, like eternal torment, opposed to the teachings of the Scriptures, to the dictates of reason, and to our feelings of humanity. According to the popular belief, the redeemed in heaven are acquainted with all that takes place on the earth and especially with the lives of the friends whom they have left behind. But how could it be a source of happiness to the dead to know the troubles of the living, to witness the sins committed by their own loved ones, and to see them enduring all the sorrows, disappointments, and anguish of life? How much of heaven’s bliss would be enjoyed by those who were hovering over their friends on earth? And how utterly revolting is the belief that as soon as the breath leaves the body the soul of the impenitent is consigned to the flames of hell! To what depths of anguish must those be plunged who see their friends passing to the grave unprepared, to enter upon an eternity of woe and sin! Many have been driven to insanity by this harrowing thought.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 545.

- c. What did Jesus say about death? Matthew 9:18, 19, 23, 24; John 11:11–14.
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“Christ represents death as a sleep to His believing children. Their life is hid with Christ in God, and until the last trump shall sound those who die will sleep in Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 527.

- d. How did the apostle Peter signify that a righteous person does not go immediately to heaven upon death? Acts 2:29, 34.
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3. THE SERPENT'S LIE RETOLD

- a. How were the Israelites warned against heathen customs involving supposed communication with the dead? Leviticus 19:28; Deuteronomy 14:1.
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“Nearly all forms of ancient sorcery and witchcraft were founded upon a belief in communion with the dead. Those who practiced the arts of necromancy claimed to have intercourse with departed spirits, and to obtain through them a knowledge of future events. . . .

“This same belief in communion with the dead formed the cornerstone of heathen idolatry. The gods of the heathen were believed to be the deified spirits of departed heroes. Thus the religion of the heathen was a worship of the dead. . . .

“The deification of the dead has held a prominent place in nearly every system of heathenism, as has also the supposed communion with the dead. The gods were believed to communicate their will to men, and also, when consulted, to give them counsel. Of this character were the famous oracles of Greece and Rome.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 684.

- b. How was King Saul led to seek counsel from Satan under the guise of the supposed spirit of the dead prophet? 1 Samuel 28:7–14.
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- c. What should be the perspective of every true worshipper of the living God? Isaiah 8:19, 20.
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“If men had been willing to receive the truth so plainly stated in the Scriptures concerning the nature of man and the state of the dead, they would see in the claims and manifestations of spiritualism the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders. But rather than yield the liberty so agreeable to the carnal heart, and renounce the sins which they love, multitudes close their eyes to the light and walk straight on, regardless of warnings, while Satan weaves his snares about them, and they become his prey. ‘Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,’ therefore ‘God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie’ (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11).”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 559.

4. CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER DEATH

- a. **Who controls life and death? Psalm 68:20; Revelation 1:18. Although He holds the keys of death, what did Jesus do? Hebrews 2:9; Acts 2:24.**

“In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. ‘He that hath the Son hath life’ (1 John 5:12). The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life. ‘He that believeth in Me,’ said Jesus, ‘though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?’ (John 11:25, 26). Christ here looks forward to the time of His second coming. Then the righteous dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the living righteous shall be translated to heaven without seeing death. . . . By His word and His works He declared Himself the Author of the resurrection. He who Himself was soon to die upon the cross stood with the keys of death, a conqueror of the grave, and asserted His right and power to give eternal life.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

- b. **What has Jesus done to death? 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14, 15.**

“The question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” has been answered. By bearing the penalty of sin, by going down into the grave, Christ has brightened the tomb for all who die in faith. God in human form has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. In dying, Christ secured eternal life for all who believe in Him. In dying, He condemned the originator of sin and disloyalty to suffer the penalty of sin—eternal death.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 230, 231.

- c. **In contrast to death’s penalty, what is God’s gift? Romans 6:23; John 3:16.**

“To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 786, 787.

“All believers who pass through a natural death, have, through eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God, eternal life in them, which is the life of Jesus Christ. In dying, Jesus has made it impossible for those who believe on Him to die eternally.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 926.

5. DEATH DESTROYED

- a. **What happens after the first and second resurrections? Revelation 20:4–15.**

“At the close of the thousand years, Christ . . . bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. . . . What a contrast to those who were raised at the first resurrection! The righteous were clothed with immortal youth and beauty. The wicked bear the traces of disease and death.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

- b. **What will finally happen to all the wicked? Matthew 13:40–42. Rather than eternal punishment, what is inflicted on them? Malachi 4:1–3.**

“Some [of the wicked] are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished ‘according to their deeds’ (Psalm 28:4). . . . [Satan] is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God’s people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah.”—*Ibid.*, p. 673.

- c. **What will happen to even death itself? 1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 21:4.**

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How was death introduced to this world?
2. What state does a person enter after death?
3. How was the first lie of the serpent perpetuated throughout history?
4. What has Christ done to the curse of death?
5. How do we know that the wicked are not left to burn eternally?

The Millennium and the New Earth

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

“God’s entire universe was clean, and the great controversy was forever ended. Wherever we looked, everything upon which the eye rested was beautiful and holy. . . . The beautiful new earth, with all its glory, was the eternal inheritance of the saints.”—*Early Writings*, p. 295.

Suggested Reading: *Early Writings*, pp. 17–20, 288–295.

Sunday

December 13

1. ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

- a. **Where will the faithful be after Christ’s second coming?** 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17.

“We all entered the cloud together and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. . . . All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle from their shoulders to their feet.”—*Early Writings*, pp. 16, 17.

- b. **What gives the saints the right to enter the New Jerusalem?** Psalm 87:3–6; Galatians 4:26; Revelation 22:14; Isaiah 26:1, 2.

“Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city. Jesus raised His mighty, glorious arm, laid hold of the pearly gate, swung it back on its glittering hinges, and said to us, ‘You have washed your robes in My blood, stood stiffly for My truth, enter in.’ We all marched in and felt that we had a perfect right in the city.”—*Ibid.*, p. 17.

2. THE MILLENNIUM

- a. How long will the saints spend in heaven? Revelation 20:4. What will we be doing during this time? 1 Corinthians 6:2; Matthew 19:28.
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“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. . . . In union with Christ [the righteous] judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 660, 661.

- b. Where will Satan be during the millennium? Revelation 20:1–3. In what state will the earth be during this time? Jeremiah 4:23–27.
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“Here [on this earth] is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Limited to the earth, he will not have access to other worlds to tempt and annoy those who have never fallen. It is in this sense that he is bound: there are none remaining, upon whom he can exercise his power. He is wholly cut off from the work of deception and ruin which for so many centuries has been his sole delight. . . .

“For six thousand years, Satan’s work of rebellion has ‘made the earth to tremble.’ He has ‘made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof.’ And he ‘opened not the house of his prisoners.’ For six thousand years his prison house has received God’s people, and he would have held them captive forever; but Christ has broken his bonds and set the prisoners free.

“Even the wicked are now placed beyond the power of Satan, and alone with his evil angels he remains to realize the effect of the curse which sin has brought. . . .

“For a thousand years, Satan will wander to and fro in the desolate earth to behold the results of his rebellion against the law of God. During this time his sufferings are intense. Since his fall his life of unceasing activity has banished reflection; but he is now deprived of his power and left to contemplate the part which he has acted since first he rebelled against the government of heaven, and to look forward with trembling and terror to the dreadful future when he must suffer for all the evil that he has done and be punished for the sins that he has caused to be committed.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 659, 660.

3. MOVING THE HEADQUARTERS

- a. What will take place at the conclusion of the judgment in heaven? Revelation 21:2, 3.
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“With Jesus at our head we all descended from the city down to this earth, on a great and mighty mountain, which could not bear Jesus up, and it parted asunder, and there was a mighty plain. Then we looked up and saw the great city, with twelve foundations, and twelve gates, three on each side, and an angel at each gate. We all cried out, ‘The city, the great city, it’s coming, it’s coming down from God out of heaven,’ and it came and settled on the place where we stood.”—*Early Writings*, pp. 17, 18.

- b. Where will the New Jerusalem be located? Zechariah 14:4.
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“As the place of His ascension, Jesus chose the spot so often hallowed by His presence while He dwelt among men. Not Mount Zion, the place of David’s city, not Mount Moriah, the temple site, was to be thus honored. There Christ had been mocked and rejected. There the waves of mercy, still returning in a stronger tide of love, had been beaten back by hearts as hard as rock. Thence Jesus, weary and heart-burdened, had gone forth to find rest in the Mount of Olives. The holy Shekinah, in departing from the first temple, had stood upon the eastern mountain, as if loath to forsake the chosen city; so Christ stood upon Olivet, with yearning heart overlooking Jerusalem. The groves and glens of the mountain had been consecrated by His prayers and tears. Its steep slopes had echoed the triumphant shouts of the multitude that proclaimed Him king. On its sloping descent He had found a home with Lazarus at Bethany. In the garden of Gethsemane at its foot He had prayed and agonized alone. From this mountain He was to ascend to heaven. Upon its summit His feet will rest when He shall come again. Not as a man of sorrows, but as a glorious and triumphant king He will stand upon Olivet, while Hebrew hallelujahs mingle with Gentile hosannas, and the voices of the redeemed as a mighty host shall swell the acclamation, Crown Him Lord of all!”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 829, 830.

4. A NEW EARTH

- a. **When the wicked are no more, what will happen to the earth?**
Revelation 21:1; Psalm 102:25, 26.
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- b. **What will the redeemed do on the new earth?** Isaiah 32:18; 65:21, 22.
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“Then we began to look at the glorious things outside of the city. There I saw most glorious houses, that had the appearance of silver, supported by four pillars set with pearls most glorious to behold. These were to be inhabited by the saints. In each was a golden shelf. I saw many of the saints go into the houses, take off their glittering crowns and lay them on the shelf, then go out into the field by the houses to do something with the earth; not as we have to do with the earth here; no, no. A glorious light shone all about their heads, and they were continually shouting and offering praises to God.”—*Early Writings*, p. 18.

“In the earth made new, the redeemed will engage in the occupations and pleasures that brought happiness to Adam and Eve in the beginning. The Eden life will be lived, the life in garden and field.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 730, 731.

- c. **How does the Bible describe the environment of the new earth?**
Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25.
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“I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out, ‘They will never fade.’ Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts—the lion, the lamb, the leopard, and the wolf, all together in perfect union. We passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here; no, no; but light, and all over glorious; the branches of the trees moved to and fro, and we all cried out, ‘We will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.’ ”—*Early Writings*, p. 18.

“[Children’s] minds should be filled with stories of the life of the Lord, and their imaginations encouraged in picturing the glories of the world to come.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 488.

5. INHERITING THE EARTH

- a. What is prophesied of those who, though outcasts from the present world, will inherit the next? Psalm 37:8–11.

“The meek ‘shall inherit the earth’ (Matthew 5:5). It was through the desire for self-exaltation that sin entered into the world, and our first parents lost the dominion over this fair earth, their kingdom. It is through self-abnegation that Christ redeems what was lost. And He says we are to overcome as He did. Revelation 3:21. Through humility and self-surrender we may become heirs with Him. . . .

“The earth promised to the meek will not be like this, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse. . . .

“There is no disappointment, no sorrow, no sin, no one who shall say, I am sick; there are no burial trains, no mourning, no death, no partings, no broken hearts; but Jesus is there, peace is there.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 17.

- b. What will be the character of those who dwell in the new earth? 2 Peter 3:13.

“The feet of the wicked will never desecrate the earth made new. Fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them—burn them up root and branch. Satan is the root, and his children are the branches.”—*Early Writings*, p. 52.

“The same fire from God that consumed the wicked purified the whole earth. The broken, ragged mountains melted with fervent heat, the atmosphere also, and all the stubble was consumed. Then our inheritance opened before us, glorious and beautiful, and we inherited the whole earth made new.”—*Ibid.*, p. 54.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. On what condition is a person counted as a citizen of the New Jerusalem?
2. What happens during the Millennium in heaven and on earth?
3. Why will God choose the earth for the new location of His headquarters?
4. Describe the earth made new.
5. What kind of people will inherit the new earth?

The Kingdom in You

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7, 8).

“Those whose lives have been hidden with Christ, those who on this earth have fought the good fight of faith, will shine forth with the Redeemer’s glory in the kingdom of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 287.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674–678.

Sunday

December 20

1. IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

- a. What did Jesus declare regarding His kingdom in this present world? Luke 17:20, 21; John 4:20–24.
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“Not by seeking a holy mountain or a sacred temple are men brought into communion with heaven. Religion is not to be confined to external forms and ceremonies. The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

- b. To whom is the kingdom given? Luke 12:32; Matthew 5:3; 7:21.
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“Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit’s working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them and to make them His sons and daughters.”—*Ibid.*

2. A CONSTANT HOPE

a. What is our hope as believers in Christ? Titus 2:13.

b. What is to be given to those who enter heaven? 2 Timothy 4:8.
How should this encourage us to steadfastness? Revelation 3:11.

“To the overcomer is promised a crown of unfading glory and a life that measures with the life of God. ‘To him that overcometh,’ Christ declares, ‘will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.’ ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him’ (Revelation 2:7; 1 Corinthians 2:9). Let us strive to obtain an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord. Let us diligently study the Gospel that Christ came in person to present to John on the Isle of Patmos—the Gospel that is termed, ‘The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.’ Let us remember always that ‘blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand’ (Revelation 1:1, 3).”—*Signs of the Times*, February 4, 1903.

c. Though at times evil appears to triumph, what assurance do we have? Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 13:8.

“Through centuries of persecution, conflict, and darkness, God has sustained His church. Not one cloud has fallen upon it that He has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork His work, that He has not foreseen. All has taken place as He predicted. He has not left His church forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and that which His Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell has been brought about. All His purposes will be fulfilled. His law is linked with His throne, and no power of evil can destroy it. Truth is inspired and guarded by God; and it will triumph over all opposition.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 11, 12.

3. HASTENING THE KINGDOM

- a. What should we pray regarding the kingdom of God? Matthew 6:10. How should this prayer influence our priorities? Verse 33.

“My dear brethren and sisters, let the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ be in your minds continually and let them crowd out worldly thoughts and cares. When you lie down and when you rise up, let them be your meditation. Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man. The sealing time is very short and will soon be over. Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure.”—*Early Writings*, p. 58.

- b. What part do we have in the nearness of Christ's coming? Matthew 24:14; 2 Peter 3:12.

“It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

“In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. . . . Influence, wealth, education, were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of the leaders. . . .

“Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, education, placed their possessor under the greater obligation to serve his fellows. . . .

“Among His disciples Christ was in every sense a caretaker, a burden bearer. He shared their poverty, He practiced self-denial on their account, He went before them to smooth the more difficult places, and soon He would consummate His work on earth by laying down His life. The principle on which Christ acted is to actuate the members of the church which is His body. . . . In the kingdom of Christ those are greatest who follow the example He has given and act as shepherds of His flock.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

4. REMINDERS

- a. **What is the ceremony that reminds us of the coming kingdom? Luke 22:14–20; 1 Corinthians 11:26.**
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“The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper was given to commemorate the great deliverance wrought out as the result of the death of Christ. Till He shall come the second time in power and glory, this ordinance is to be celebrated. It is the means by which His great work for us is to be kept fresh in our minds.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 652, 653.

“It is at these [ordinances], His own appointments, that Christ meets His people and energizes them by His presence.”—*Ibid.*, p. 656.

- b. **Though we may face affliction and persecution, what should we bear in mind? Matthew 5:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18.**
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“Many of your afflictions have been visited upon you, in the wisdom of God, to bring you closer to the throne of grace. He softens and subdues His children by sorrows and trials. This world is God’s workshop, where He fashions us for the courts of heaven. He uses the planing knife upon our quivering hearts until the roughness and irregularities are removed and we are fitted for our proper places in the heavenly building. Through tribulation and distress the Christian becomes purified and strengthened, and develops a character after the model that Christ has given. The influence of a true, godly life cannot be measured. It reaches beyond the immediate circle of home and friends, shedding a light that wins souls to Jesus.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 143.

“The bright and cheerful side of our religion will be represented by all who are daily consecrated to God. We should not dishonor God by the mournful relation of trials that appear grievous. All trials that are received as educators will produce joy. The whole religious life will be uplifting, elevating, ennobling, fragrant with good words and works. The enemy is well pleased to have souls depressed, downcast, mourning and groaning; he wants just such impressions made as to the effect of our faith. But God designs that the mind shall take no low level. He desires every soul to triumph in the keeping power of the Redeemer.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 365, 366.

5. A KINGDOM WITHOUT END

a. In view of the exhortations of the apostles, what should we do from today forward? 1 John 2:28; John 3:2, 3; 2 Peter 1:10, 11.

b. How will we spend eternity in the everlasting kingdom? Revelation 5:13.

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

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. 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.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we ensure our place in the spiritual kingdom of God?
2. What promises can encourage us in the midst of the battle between good and evil?
3. What can you do to hasten the coming of Jesus?
4. Explain some things that can help us keep eternity in view.
5. What are your plans for eternity?

First Sabbath Offerings



OCTOBER 3
for a chapel in the
West Indonesia Mission
(See p. 4.)

NOVEMBER 7
Literature for Mission Fields
(See p. 30.)



DECEMBER 5
for the "Bethel Project"
in Peru
(See p. 51.)