

SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division

Russ Harlan

Insights From the Book of
Isaiah (I)

Vol. 92, No. 3

July–September, 2016

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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.

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Foreword

The *Sabbath Bible Lessons* for the next two quarters will be examining *Insights From the Book of Isaiah*.

The book of Isaiah was not necessarily written in chronological order as a narrative history. Much of it involves prophetic insights that this servant of God was given through vision and was commissioned to pen for our instruction and edification.

“For sixty years or more [Isaiah] stood before the children of Judah as a prophet of hope, waxing bolder and still bolder in his predictions of the future triumph of the church.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 310.

“The exhortations of the prophet to Judah to behold the living God, and to accept His gracious offers, were not in vain. There were some who gave earnest heed, and who turned from their idols to the worship of Jehovah. They learned to see in their Maker love and mercy and tender compassion. And in the dark days that were to come in the history of Judah, when only a remnant were to be left in the land, the prophet’s words were to continue bearing fruit in decided reformation. ‘At that day,’ declared Isaiah, ‘shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images’ (Isaiah 17:7, 8).”—*Ibid.*, p. 320.

Here we see a reformation wrought, which was aided by the prophetic mission of Isaiah. Isn’t it likewise a time for such a reformation today? Surely we can see why these lessons are so important for us in preparation for the final judgment—which, we are told, “must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17).

We can certainly see that purity and holiness were important themes that Isaiah emphasized. Shall we not do the same, standing as we are at the very borders of the heavenly Canaan?

Reformation is important—and it works hand-in-hand with revival. For the next six months, the two will be intertwined as found in the book of Isaiah.

“A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from, the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 25, 1902.

May the Lord guide our studies, that we may obtain this experience through Him!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a chapel on Maré Island, New Caledonia

New Caledonia, with a land area of 18,576 km², is an archipelago of the French Republic, located in the South Pacific Ocean. It is situated 1500 km east of Australia and 2000 km north of New Zealand. The group of islands, part of the Melanesia subregion, includes the main island of Grande Terre, the Belep archipelago, the Isle of Pines, and a few remote islets known as Lifou, Ouvea, and Maré.



The population of 268,000 inhabitants, as of August 2014, is divided across three provinces—the North Province, the South Province, and the Loyalty Islands Province. The population is a mix of Melanesian natives of New Caledonia, Polynesians, Uveans, Europeans, and Southeast Asian people. The capital of the territory is Noumea.

Half of the population is Roman Catholic, including most of the Europeans, Uveans, Vietnamese, and half of the Melanesian and Polynesian minorities. Protestant adherents are almost entirely Melanesian. There are also numerous other Christian groups and small numbers of Muslims.

The message of revival and reformation came to New Caledonia in 1984. The work progressed to the point where, today, there are two groups of believers in Noumea and one on the island of Maré. Only the North Province is yet to be reached by our message.

At its inception, the New Caledonia Mission was connected with the French Polynesia Field. However, in 2012, it became a mission connected to the General Conference and, in December 2013, became one of the seven founding missions of the South Pacific Union Mission.

By the grace of God, one brother on Maré has donated land for the building of a church. Now, for the first time, we will be constructing a house of worship for the Lord. Our resources, however, are insufficient to complete this project. Therefore, we are appealing to our brothers and sisters around the world to help us realize this plan. As you remember us in your giving, we pray that the Lord will bless you wonderfully and shower abundant grace to all.

“Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands” (Isaiah 42:12).

Your brothers and sisters from New Caledonia

The State of the Vineyard

“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isaiah 5:4).

“Yield up your self-will, the long idolized habits peculiar to yourself, that you may receive the principles of truth. Thus you become a branch of the True Vine, and you will not bear wild grapes or thorn-berries but rich clusters of precious fruit.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 12, 1892.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 15–22, 303–305.

Sunday

June 26

THE CHERISHED VINEYARD

a. For what purposes did the Creator establish the Hebrew nation? Genesis 12:2; Deuteronomy 7:6–8; 26:17–19.

b. Why was this nation to be deeply grateful to God? Deuteronomy 32:9–12.

c. How did God plan for the Hebrew nation to bless other nations, and how does this apply to us today? Deuteronomy 4:5–8; Matthew 5:16.

“The Lord has His eye upon every one of His people; He has His plans concerning each. It is His purpose that those who practice His holy precepts shall be a distinguished people. . . .

“Not to this world only but to the universe are we to make manifest the principles of [God’s] kingdom.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 12, 13.

2. THE VINEYARD'S CONDITION TODAY

a. Why was God disappointed with the vineyard He loved? Isaiah 5:1–4.

“[The Jewish nation] desired to appropriate to themselves the fruits of the vineyard over which they had been made stewards. Their covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen. Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 20, 21.

b. When does the church not bear fruit from the true vine? John 15:4.

“The Lord planted His church as a vine in a fruitful field. . . . But this vine of God’s planting has inclined to the earth and entwined its tendrils about human supports. Its branches are extended far and wide, but it bears the fruit of a degenerate vine. . . .

“The Lord has bestowed great blessings upon His church. Justice demands that she return these talents with usury. As the treasures of truth committed to her keeping have increased, her obligations have increased. But instead of improving upon these gifts and going forward unto perfection, she has fallen away from that which she had attained in her earlier experience. The change in her spiritual state has come gradually and almost imperceptibly. As she began to seek the praise and friendship of the world, her faith diminished, her zeal grew languid, her fervent devotion gave place to dead formality. Every advance step toward the world was a step away from God. As pride and worldly ambition have been cherished, the spirit of Christ has departed, and emulation, dissension, and strife have come in to distract and weaken the church.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 240, 241.

c. What kind of fruit is God longing to see us bear? Galatians 5:22, 23.

“The fruit Christ claims, after the patient care bestowed upon His church, is faith, patience, love, forbearance, heavenly-mindedness, meekness. These are clusters of fruit which mature amid storm and cloud and darkness, as well as in the sunshine.”—*Ibid.*, p. 117.

3. SHUNNING A SHALLOW EXPERIENCE

- a. Describe the state of the Lord's spiritual vineyard in the early reign of Uzziah, king of Judah? 2 Kings 15:1-3; 2 Chronicles 26:1-7, 15.

“The long reign of Uzziah [also known as Azariah] in the land of Judah and Benjamin was characterized by a prosperity greater than that of any other ruler since the death of Solomon, nearly two centuries before. For many years the king ruled with discretion. Under the blessing of Heaven his armies regained some of the territory that had been lost in former years. Cities were rebuilt and fortified, and the position of the nation among the surrounding peoples was greatly strengthened. Commerce revived, and the riches of the nations flowed into Jerusalem.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 303.

- b. Name some spiritual blemishes that darkened the picture. 2 Kings 15:4.

“This outward prosperity [under Uzziah] . . . was not accompanied by a corresponding revival of spiritual power. The temple services were continued as in former years, and multitudes assembled to worship the living God; but pride and formality gradually took the place of humility and sincerity.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 303, 304.

- c. How does a neglect to put away evil plague us? Song of Solomon 2:15.

“Many pet and excuse the defects in their characters; but these must all be remedied. Every deviation from the right is sin and sin must be put away. We cannot afford to walk carelessly before our brethren or before the world.

“Many confess their sins again and again but do not put them away by genuine repentance. Unless we have a firm purpose and the aid of the grace of God, strong resolutions and vigilant watchfulness will be vain and powerless when temptations assail the soul.”—*The Signs of the Times*, March 6, 1884.

“It is the little foxes that spoil the vines, the little neglects, the little deficiencies, the little dishonesties, the little departures from principle, that blind the soul and separate it from God.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 226.

4. TARNISHED BY PRIDE

- a. Why did disaster come upon Uzziah? 2 Chronicles 26:16–21; Numbers 15:30.
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“The sin that resulted so disastrously to Uzziah was one of presumption. In violation of a plain command of Jehovah, that none but the descendants of Aaron should officiate as priests, the king entered the sanctuary ‘to burn incense upon the altar.’ Azariah the high priest and his associates remonstrated, and pleaded with him to turn from his purpose. ‘Thou hast trespassed,’ they urged; ‘neither shall it be for thine honor’ (2 Chronicles 26:16, 18).

“Uzziah was filled with wrath that he, the king, should be thus rebuked. But he was not permitted to profane the sanctuary against the united protest of those in authority. While standing there, in wrathful rebellion, he was suddenly smitten with a divine judgment. Leprosy appeared on his forehead. In dismay he fled, never again to enter the temple courts. Unto the day of his death, some years later, Uzziah remained a leper—a living example of the folly of departing from a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ Neither his exalted position nor his long life of service could be pleaded as an excuse for the presumptuous sin by which he marred the closing years of his reign, and brought upon himself the judgment of Heaven.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 304.

“The Lord has ordained men to certain positions in his church, and He would not have them step out of the places to which He has appointed them. When the Lord gives them a measure of success, they are not to become lifted up, and think themselves qualified to do a work for which they are not fitted, and to which God has not called them.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 14, 1900.

- b. How does God consider pride? Proverbs 6:16, 17; James 4:6.
-

“He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 30.

“Pride, self-confidence, love of the world, fault finding, bitterness, envy, are the fruit borne by many who profess the religion of Christ. Their deportment is in sharp contrast to the character of Christ. . . . With such conversions Christ had no connection.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 15, 1902.

5. FACING CONSEQUENCES OR CHOOSING CONSECRATION?

- a. Describe the prevailing conditions in Israel and Judah at the time Isaiah was called to serve as a prophet. Isaiah 1:1–9, 21–23.
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“The reign of Uzziah was drawing to a close, and Jotham was already bearing many of the burdens of state, when Isaiah, of the royal line, was called, while yet a young man, to the prophetic mission. . . . The divine protection was being removed, and the Assyrian forces were about to overspread the land of Judah.

“But the dangers from without, overwhelming though they seemed, were not so serious as the dangers from within. It was the perversity of his people that brought to the Lord’s servant the greatest perplexity and the deepest depression.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 305.

- b. What summarizes the plight of the faithful, then and now? Psalm 11:3.
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“With oppression and wealth came pride and love of display, gross drunkenness, and a spirit of revelry. . . . Iniquitous practices had become so prevalent among all classes that the few who remained true to God were often tempted to lose heart and to give way to discouragement and despair.”—*Ibid.*, p. 306.

“While others are panting after earthly enjoyments, be ye panting after the unmistakable assurance of the love of God, earnestly, fervently crying: Who will show me how to make my calling and election sure?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 145.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What caused the faith of God’s church to decline?
2. Name one seemingly small oversight during Uzziah’s reign.
3. Why does God consider pride such a grievous sin? Do we?
4. How did Judah’s superficial prosperity eventually affect them as a nation?
5. In an age of degeneracy, what do God’s faithful few need to realize?

Ripe for Reformation

“In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach” (Isaiah 4:1).

“We are not to cling to our own ways, our own plans, our own ideas; we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 218.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 216–220; vol. 4, pp. 628–648.

Sunday

July 3

1. SELFISH GREED

- a. Describe Judah’s condition as Jotham, the son of Uzziah, began to take on more responsibilities prior to his father’s death. 2 Kings 15:34, 35; Hosea 10:13; 11:7.

“By their apostasy and rebellion those who should have been standing as light bearers among the nations were inviting the judgments of God. Many of the evils which were hastening the swift destruction of the northern kingdom, and which had recently been denounced in unmistakable terms by Hosea and Amos, were fast corrupting the kingdom of Judah.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 306.

- b. How were the material goods—given by God—being managed? Isaiah 3:14, 15; 5:8; 10:1, 2.

“The outlook was particularly discouraging as regards the social conditions of the people. In their desire for gain, men were adding house to house and field to field. See Isaiah 5:8. Justice was perverted, and no pity was shown the poor. . . . Even the magistrates, whose duty it was to protect the helpless, turned a deaf ear to the cries of the poor and needy, the widows and the fatherless.”—*Ibid.*

2. YOUTHFUL PRIDE

- a. **What did God declare would come as result of the pride and love of display that accompanied oppression? Isaiah 2:11, 12; Proverbs 29:23.**
-

“Pride of heart is a fearful trait of character. ‘Pride goeth before destruction.’ This is true in the family, the church, and the nation.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 377.

“The moment we begin to feel self-sufficient and confident then we are in danger of a disgraceful failure.”—*This Day With God*, p. 277.

- b. **What situation did Isaiah prophesy, and how would it impact the administration of justice? Isaiah 3:4–6, 12. How can we ensure that our children are properly trained in order to escape this destructive trend today?**
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“Parents generally have not taken a proper course with their children. They have not restrained them as they should, but have left them to indulge in pride and follow their own inclinations. Anciently, parental authority was regarded; children were then in subjection to their parents, and feared and revered them; but in these last days the order is reversed. Some parents are in subjection to their children. They fear to cross the will of their children, and therefore yield to them. But just as long as children are under the roof of the parents, dependent upon them, they should be subject to their control. Parents should move with decision, requiring that their views of right be followed out.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 216, 217.

“Parents, make home happy for your children. By this I do not mean that you are to indulge them. The more they are indulged, the harder they will be to manage, and the more difficult it will be for them to live true, noble lives when they go out into the world. If you allow them to do as they please, their purity and loveliness of character will quickly fade. Teach them to obey. Let them see that your word must be respected. This may seem to bring them a little unhappiness now, but it will save them from much unhappiness in the future. Let the home government be just and tender, full of love and compassion, yet firm and true. Do not permit one disrespectful word or disobedient act.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 8, 1903.

“The mother should not allow her child to gain an advantage over her in a single instance.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 283.

3. GLITZ AND GLAMOUR

- a. List some of the objections the Lord had against the women of Zion in Isaiah's day. (Use a Bible dictionary for more insight.) Isaiah 3:16–23.
-

“The love of display produces extravagance, and in many young people kills the aspiration for a nobler life. Instead of seeking an education, they early engage in some occupation to earn money for indulging the passion for dress. And through this passion many a young girl is beguiled to ruin. . . .

“Even the day and the services of worship are not exempt from fashion's domination. . . . The church is made a parade ground, and the fashions are studied more than the sermon.”—*Education*, p. 247.

“The idolatry of dress is a moral disease.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 432.

“Not a few of our people are backsliding. They are imitating the fashions of the world. Their spirituality is dying. Step by step they are approaching world-loving. Selfishness and pride are taking possession of them, and the love of God finds little room in their hearts. Some who were once zealous reformers are now indifferent. Sisters who were once plain in dress are now conforming to fashion.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 17, 1904.

- b. In contrast to wearing provocative clothing, how should Christians dress? 1 Timothy 2:9; Romans 13:14.
-

“You can choose life and salvation if you will, or you can choose to worship self and devote your precious hours of probation to making your person attractive to please the eye of the worldling and the sensualist, to receive flattery from lying lips, and at last reap that harvest which you have been sowing—corruption.”—*Daughters of God*, p. 121.

“True Christians are elevated in their conversation; and while they believe it to be a sin to condescend to foolish flattery, they are courteous, kind, and benevolent. Their words are those of sincerity and truth. They are faithful in their dealings with their brethren and with the world. In their dress they avoid superfluity and display; but their clothing is modest and arranged upon the person with order and taste.”—*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 87.

4. CHOOSE A HIGHER CALLING INSTEAD

- a. What serious consequences to our spirituality will show, provocative habits of dressing have if they are not removed from the church? Isaiah 3:24–26; Matthew 5:27, 28.
-

“The love of dress endangers the morals and makes woman the opposite of the Christian lady characterized by modesty and sobriety. Showy, extravagant dress too often encourages lust in the heart of the wearer and awakens base passions in the heart of the beholder.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 645.

“Fashion is deteriorating the intellect and eating out the spirituality of our people. Obedience to fashion is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God. I have been shown that our church rules are very deficient. All exhibitions of pride in dress, which is forbidden in the word of God, should be sufficient reason for church discipline. If there is a continuance, in face of warnings and appeals and entreaties, to still follow the perverse will, it may be regarded as proof that the heart is in no way assimilated to Christ. Self, and only self, is the object of adoration, and one such professed Christian will lead many away from God.

“There is a terrible sin upon us as a people, that we have permitted our church members to dress in a manner inconsistent with their faith. We must arise at once and close the door against the allurements of fashion. Unless we do this, our churches will become demoralized.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 647, 648.

- b. Describe the training to be given to our youth. Titus 2:3–6; 1 Peter 3:1–4.
-

“Girls should be taught that the true charm of womanliness is not alone in beauty of form or feature, nor in the possession of accomplishments; but in a meek and quiet spirit, in patience, generosity, kindness, and a willingness to do and suffer for others. They should be taught to work, to study to some purpose, to live for some object, to trust in God and fear Him, and to respect their parents. Then as they advance in years, they will grow more pure-minded, self-reliant, and beloved. It will be impossible to degrade such a woman. She will escape the temptations and trials that have been the ruin of so many.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 140.

5. CALLED BY A NAME—OR CONVERTED BY A SAVIOUR?

- a. What spiritual pitfall has plagued God's people, both in Isaiah's day and ours (keep in mind that, in Bible symbols, "seven" denotes completeness and a "woman" often refers to a church—Jeremiah 6:2)? Isaiah 4:1. What is God's response? Isaiah 55:8, 9.
-

"We must come up to a higher standard, or we are unworthy of the Christian name."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 605.

"The Christian warfare is not a life of indulgence to eat and drink and dress as self-indulgent worldlings. The Lord Jesus came in human nature to our world to give His precious life as an example of what our life should be. He is the specimen, not of spiritual indulgence, but of a life constantly before us of self-denial, self-sacrifice. We have the correct view that Christ our Pattern came to give us. There is before us the Prince of heaven, the Son of God. He laid aside the royal crown and the princely robe and came to take His position in our world as a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. How few take it in!"—*The Upward Look*, p. 217.

- b. Explain a vital pillar of Christian faith. Luke 9:23–26.
-

"We have a character to maintain, but it is the character of Christ. . . . May the Lord help us to die to self, and be born again, that Christ may live in us, a living, active principle, a power that will keep us holy."—*My Life Today*, p. 335.

"Let self die. Surrender your will and die to self now, just now, and leave God to make your way for you."—*This Day With God*, p. 323.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is earthly prosperity often a curse and a snare to God's people?
2. How can we as parents improve in guiding and nurturing our children?
3. Name some vain aspects of dress that show signs of spiritual weakness.
4. How can we lead our youth to develop holier tastes and purer minds?
5. In what ways am I being self-willed instead of surrendered to God?

Facing Reality

“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

“Isaiah had denounced woes upon others for their apostasy and separation from God. He had been almost ready to yield to discouragement, so keenly did he realize that he dwelt among ‘a people of unclean lips;’ but now he sees himself in danger. He is himself ‘a man of unclean lips.’ He had no disposition to exalt himself. O how little he was in his own wisdom, how unworthy, how unfitted for sacred service.”—*The Bible Echo*, September 9, 1895.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 217–235.

Sunday

July 10

1. SEEING OTHERS AS THE HOPELESS ONES

- a. How have others expressed the type of feelings Isaiah would have had in beholding great wickedness in God’s professed people? Psalm 94:3, 4; Jeremiah 4:14.

“It seemed as if God’s purpose for Israel were about to fail and that the rebellious nation was to suffer a fate similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

“In the face of such conditions it is not surprising that when, during the last year of Uzziah’s reign, Isaiah was called to bear to Judah God’s messages of warning and reproof, he shrank from the responsibility. He well knew that he would encounter obstinate resistance. As he realized his own inability to meet the situation and thought of the stubbornness and unbelief of the people for whom he was to labor, his task seemed hopeless. Should he in despair relinquish his mission and leave Judah undisturbed to their idolatry? Were the gods of Nineveh to rule the earth in defiance of the God of heaven?

“Such thoughts as these were crowding through Isaiah’s mind as he stood under the portico of the temple.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 306, 307.

2. A LIFE-CHANGING MOMENT

- a. **What did Isaiah see in vision as he stood before the temple? Isaiah 6:1–4.**
-

“Suddenly the gate and the inner veil of the temple seemed to be uplifted or withdrawn, and [Isaiah] was permitted to gaze within, upon the holy of holies, where even the prophet’s feet might not enter. There rose up before him a vision of Jehovah sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, while the train of His glory filled the temple. On each side of the throne hovered the seraphim, their faces veiled in adoration, as they ministered before their Maker and united in the solemn invocation, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory,’ until post and pillar and cedar gate seemed shaken with the sound, and the house was filled with their tribute of praise.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 307.

“Did [Isaiah] think himself unworthy before he had a view of God’s glory?—No; he imagined himself in a righteous state before God.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 4, 1889.

- b. **Upon seeing this vision, what abruptly happened to Isaiah’s image of himself (keeping in mind that he had already delivered messages of rebuke to Israel)? Isaiah 6:5.**
-

“As Isaiah beheld this revelation of the glory and majesty of his Lord, he was overwhelmed with a sense of the purity and holiness of God. How sharp the contrast between the matchless perfection of his Creator, and the sinful course of those who, with himself, had long been numbered among the chosen people of Israel and Judah!”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 307.

“Isaiah had denounced the sin of others; but now he sees himself exposed to the same condemnation he had pronounced upon them. He had been satisfied with a cold, lifeless ceremony in his worship of God. He had not known this until the vision was given him of the Lord. How little now appeared his wisdom and talents as he looked upon the sacredness and majesty of the sanctuary. How unworthy he was! how unfitted for sacred service! His view of himself might be expressed in the language of the apostle Paul, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ ”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1139.

3. THE CALL OF THE HOUR

- a. What is needed today, just as much as it was in Isaiah's time? Joel 2:12, 13.
-

"Close heart searching is needed. With tears and heartbroken confession we need to draw nigh to God that He may draw nigh to us."—*Evangelism*, p. 510.

"There must be thorough repentance, faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ, vigilant watchfulness, unceasing prayer, and diligent searching of the Scriptures."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 338.

"Pure and undefiled religion is to be brought into the sanctuary of the soul. Each has a work to do, and no friend or minister can do it for him; each must repent for himself, and confess his sins to God. Make thorough work of it. Believe for yourself; have the grace of God in your heart for yourself. God will have his true, faithful witnesses in every walk of life, testifying to the power of his grace. They may be humble, but they will be living in the sunshine of God's countenance, with the Bible as their guide.

"See, O see, where your duties have been neglected, and where you have given an example to both believers and unbelievers which would lead them away from God, away from righteousness and the spirit of the truth. Jesus would have men come to him, trust in him, rely upon him, and have their experience founded upon him alone."—*The Review and Herald*, December 18, 1888.

- b. What experience does God desire for those who follow Him? Proverbs 4:18.
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"The Lord bids you to come up higher, to reach a holier standard. You must have an experience much deeper than you have yet even thought of having. . . . Give to Jesus the heart's best and holiest affections. Treasure every ray of light. Cherish every desire of the soul after God. Give yourselves the culture of spiritual thoughts and holy communings. You have seen but the first rays of the early dawn of His glory. As you follow on to know the Lord, you will know that His going forth is prepared as the morning. . . . Having repented of our sins, confessed them, and found pardon, we are to continue to learn of Christ until we come into the full noontide of a perfect gospel faith."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 317, 318.

4. OH, THAT OUR EYES MIGHT BE OPENED!

- a. Explain the far-reaching extent of our need for repentance. Joel 2:15–17.
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“Let the many ministers of Christ sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, and seek God while He is to be found. Call upon Him while you are now lying at the foot of the cross of Calvary. Divest yourselves of all pride and as representative guardians of the churches, weep between the porch and the altar. . . . Pray, oh, pray for the outpouring of the Spirit of God!”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 189.

“Instead of lifting up their souls in self-sufficiency, ministers and people should be confessing their sins before God and one another.”—*Ibid.*, p. 390.

- b. What do we all need to understand in this solemn work? Romans 3:9–12.
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“There is too much comparing ourselves among ourselves, taking poor fallible mortals for a pattern when we have a sure, unerring Pattern. The people of God should not measure themselves by the world, nor by the opinions of men, nor by what they once were before embracing the truth. But their faith and position in the world, as they now are, must be compared with what they would have been if their course had been continually onward and upward since they professed to be followers of Christ. This is the only safe comparison that can be made. In every other, there will be self-deception. If the moral character and spiritual state of God’s people do not correspond with the blessings, privileges, and light which have been conferred upon them, they are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Angels make their report, Wanting!”—*The Review and Herald*, August 31, 1886.

“We cannot afford to live on the husks of others’ faults or failings. Evil-speaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image. But by beholding Jesus, talking of His love and perfection of character, we become changed into His image.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 492.

5. CONTRITION AND CLEANSING

- a. Once Isaiah's heart was humbled as never before, what did the God of heaven do for His servant? Isaiah 6:6, 7. What should we learn from this?
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“The vision given to Isaiah [in chapter 6] represents the condition of God's people in the last days. They are privileged to see by faith the work that is going forward in the heavenly sanctuary. ‘And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament.’ As they look by faith into the holy of holies, and see the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, they perceive that they are a people of unclean lips,—a people whose lips have often spoken vanity, and whose talents have not been sanctified and employed to the glory of God. Well may they despair as they contrast their own weakness and unworthiness with the purity and loveliness of the glorious character of Christ. But if they, like Isaiah, will receive the impression the Lord designs shall be made upon the heart, if they will humble their souls before God, there is hope for them. The bow of promise is above the throne, and the work done for Isaiah will be performed in them. God will respond to the petitions coming from the contrite heart.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1139.

- b. What should be our daily prayer? Psalm 51:2, 7.
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“Do not listen to the enemy's suggestion to stay away from Christ until you have made yourself better; until you are good enough to come to God. If you wait until then, you will never come.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 205, 206.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Before the temple vision, how did Isaiah feel about himself and others?
2. How did the vision of heavenly glory transform the prophet's attitude?
3. Describe the work that needs to be done by all of us today.
4. Explain what happens when we become faultfinders.
5. What assurance given to Isaiah echoes down to every contrite soul?

Reasoning for Righteousness

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

“[Jesus] is acquainted with the sins of men, He knows all their acts and reads their secret motives; yet He does not turn away from them in their iniquity. He pleads and reasons with the sinner, and in one sense—that of having Himself borne the weakness of humanity—He puts Himself on a level with him.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 294.

Suggested Reading: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 23–41.

Sunday

July 17

1. WILLINGNESS OF HEART

- a. Freshly purged after seeing the vision of the heavenly sanctuary, what was Isaiah’s response to the call of God? Isaiah 6:8–10.

“The prophet [Isaiah] was nerved for the work before him. The memory of this vision [of the temple in heaven] was carried with him throughout his long and arduous mission.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 751.

- b. How should we, too, respond to God’s appeal today? Hebrews 3:12–15.
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“Heavenly angels have long been waiting for human agents—the members of the church—to cooperate with them in the great work to be done. They are waiting for you.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 46, 47.

“There is something for everyone to do. Every soul that believes the truth is to stand in his lot and place, saying: ‘Here am I; send me.’”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 49.

2. INTELLIGENT REASONING

- a. Explain how and why God makes an appeal to us logically. Isaiah 1:18.
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“The Lord requires His people to use their reason, and not lay it aside for impressions. His work will be intelligible to all His children. His teaching will be such as will commend itself to the understanding of intelligent minds. It is calculated to elevate the mind.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 230.

“Christ has bought our hearts. Christ has bought the human intelligence. Christ has bought the reasoning powers; and Christ has entrusted us with capabilities and with powers. He does not want that we should let these powers and capabilities be employed merely in the common things of earthly substance, and lose sight of the eternal.”—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 251.

“A great name among men is as letters traced in sand, but a spotless character will endure to all eternity. God gives you intelligence and a reasoning mind, whereby you may grasp His promises; and Jesus is ready to help you in forming a strong, symmetrical character.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 81.

- b. How does the gospel bless us with greater mental clarity? 2 Timothy 1:7.
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- c. What is the relationship between the heart and the mind? Hebrews 10:16; Ezekiel 36:26.
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“What is the new heart? It is the new mind. What is the mind? It is the will. Where is your will? It is either on Satan’s side or Christ’s side. Now it is up to you. Will you put your will today on Christ’s side of the question? That is the new heart. It is the new will, a new mind.”—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 210.

“The words, ‘A new heart also will I give you’ (Ezekiel 36:26), mean, A new mind will I give you. This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 452.

3. SHARP WORDS, SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS

- a. What simple choice was Isaiah bidden to explain, and what similar choice is given to us? Isaiah 1:19, 20; Joshua 24:14, 15.
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“The will is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or choice. Every human being possessed of reason has power to choose the right. In every experience of life, God’s word to us is, ‘Choose you this day whom ye will serve’ (Joshua 24:15). Everyone may place his will on the side of the will of God, may choose to obey Him, and by thus linking himself with divine agencies, he may stand where nothing can force him to do evil. In every youth, every child, lies the power, by the help of God, to form a character of integrity and to live a life of usefulness.”—*Education*, p. 289.

“We cannot overestimate the value of simple faith and unquestioning obedience. It is by following in the path of obedience in simple faith that the character obtains perfection.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1137.

- b. What sins of God’s people were then mentioned by the prophet? Isaiah 1:21–23.
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“[A] grievous sin existing in our midst, is self-sufficiency,—Pharisaism,—feeling that we are righteous, and all our acts are meritorious, when we are far from cherishing the right spirit toward God or toward our brethren. . . . Self-esteem has been cherished, and you have had a spirit of criticism toward others because you were not first. Envy, jealousy, suspicion, faultfinding, and false witnessing have existed. There are unconsecrated hearts among you, who turn everything said or done, even under the special direction of God, in a wrong way. . . . They please the enemy . . . by making a man an offender for a word. In many of these cases that are criticised there is no actual sin; the suspicion is the result of the condition of the mind that entertains it. If one crosses their path, they have no unity or fellowship with him. They feel disgusted with all he may say or do. . . . yet those who are thus creating disaffection and disunion, and planting the seeds of jealousy, all the while claim to be firm believers in the truth. Such do not practice the spirit of the truth.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 18, 1888.

4. A THOROUGH, INTELLIGENT WORK

- a. **What is necessary in order for us to have full repentance? Psalm 119:18.**
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“[1 John 3:2, 3 quoted.] Here is a work for man to do. He must face the mirror, God’s law, discern the defects in his moral character, and put away his sins, washing his robe of character in the blood of the Lamb. . . .

“But the influence of a gospel hope will not lead the sinner to look upon the salvation of Christ as a matter of free grace, while he continues to live in transgression of the law of God. When the light of truth dawns upon his mind and he fully understands the requirements of God and realizes the extent of his transgressions, he will reform his ways, become loyal to God through the strength obtained from his Saviour, and lead a new and purer life.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 294, 295.

“In your study of the word, lay at the door of investigation your preconceived opinions and your hereditary and cultivated ideas. You will never reach the truth if you study the Scriptures to vindicate your own ideas. Leave these at the door, and with a contrite heart go in to hear what the Lord has to say to you. As the humble seeker for truth sits at Christ’s feet and learns of Him, the word gives him understanding. To those who are too wise in their own conceit to study the Bible, Christ says, You must become meek and lowly in heart if you desire to become wise unto salvation.

“Do not read the word in the light of former opinions; but, with a mind free from prejudice, search it carefully and prayerfully. If, as you read, conviction comes, and you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the word, do not try to make the word fit these opinions. Make your opinions fit the word. Do not allow what you have believed or practiced in the past to control your understanding. Open the eyes of your mind to behold wondrous things out of the law. Find out what is written, and then plant your feet on the eternal Rock.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 260.

- b. **How should our determination to turn away from sin be reminiscent of the great reformation in Nehemiah’s day? Nehemiah 4:6 (last part).**
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“Oh, may none put off the day of repentance and reformation! Now is the accepted time.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 30, 1894.

4. A FORETASTE OF REAL HARMONY

- a. Describe the level of earnest repentance Christ is looking to see in us, living as we are in this period of earth's history. Revelation 3:19.
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“ ‘A great work must be done for the remnant. Many of them are dwelling upon little trials.’ Said the angel, ‘Legions of evil angels are around you, and are trying to press in their awful darkness, that ye may be ensnared and taken. Ye suffer your minds to be diverted too readily from the work of preparation and the all-important truths for these last days. And ye dwell upon little trials and go into minute particulars of little difficulties to explain them to the satisfaction of this one or that.’ Conversation has been protracted for hours between the parties concerned, and not only has their time been wasted, but the servants of God are held to listen to them, when the hearts of both parties are unsubdued by grace. If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties.”—*Early Writings*, p. 119.

“Christ is coming. I remember when we thought that the end was to come in 1844, and when we came together in our meetings the question would be asked by one and another, ‘Brethren, have you seen anything in me that is not right? I know that we cannot see our own faults, and if any of the brethren have seen anything wrong in me, I want them to tell me.’ Sometimes there would be wrongs confessed, and we would bow before God and ask His forgiveness. Then you would see brethren who had had some difficulty going away alone in some barn or orchard and pleading with God together. Then they would come arm in arm, loving one another, and at peace among themselves. We felt that we could not separate unless everything was in harmony. The sweet spirit of peace was in our midst, and the glory of God was around us. You could see faces shine.”—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 24.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why can we be inspired by Isaiah's eagerness to accept God's call?
2. What does true Christian religion do for the human mind?
3. How will true repentance transform our relationships with one another?
4. Explain a vital key to how we can achieve real growth in our Bible study.
5. What experience from the early Advent believers would we do well to repeat?

Our Compassionate Father

“Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” (Isaiah 40:9).

“The prophet [Isaiah] exalted God as Creator of all. His message to the cities of Judah was, ‘Behold your God!’ ”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 315.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 150–163.

Sunday

July 24

1. PEACEFUL, UNDERLYING HOPE

- a. **What was Isaiah told to expect in the call he had accepted? Isaiah 6:9–12. What assurance was he to cherish nonetheless? Verse 13; 10:20, 21.**

“[Isaiah’s] burden of soul in behalf of erring Judah was not to be borne in vain. His mission was not to be wholly fruitless. . . . Throughout his lifetime he must be a patient, courageous teacher—a prophet of hope as well as of doom. The divine purpose finally accomplished, the full fruitage of his efforts, and of the labors of all God’s faithful messengers, would appear. A remnant should be saved.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 308, 309.

- b. **Name some key concepts the prophet emphasized—and why such uplifting themes can inspire us with hope. Isaiah 40:9, 13–15, 21–31.**

“The stars also have a message of good cheer for every human being. In those hours that come to all, when the heart is faint and temptation presses sore; when obstacles seem insurmountable, life’s aims impossible of achievement, its fair promises like apples of Sodom; where, then, can such courage and steadfastness be found as in that lesson which God has bidden us learn from the stars in their untroubled course?”—*Education*, p. 115.

2. THE HEART BEHIND THE CLOUD

- a. Throughout the history of the world, what misconception about God's character has always needed to be clarified? Ezekiel 18:25; Isaiah 55:8, 9.
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"In Isaiah's day the spiritual understanding of mankind was dark through misapprehension of God. Long had Satan sought to lead men to look upon their Creator as the author of sin and suffering and death. Those whom he had thus deceived, imagined that God was hard and exacting. They regarded Him as watching to denounce and condemn, unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there was a legal excuse for not helping him. The law of love by which heaven is ruled had been misrepresented by the archdeceiver as a restriction upon men's happiness, a burdensome yoke from which they should be glad to escape. He declared that its precepts could not be obeyed and that the penalties of transgression were bestowed arbitrarily.

"In losing sight of the true character of Jehovah, the Israelites were without excuse. Often had God revealed Himself to them as one 'full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth' (Psalm 86:15)." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 311.

- b. What genuine picture about God do we too often forget? Isaiah 49:13–16.
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"When we seem to doubt God's love and distrust His promises we dishonor Him and grieve His Holy Spirit. How would a mother feel if her children were constantly complaining of her, just as though she did not mean them well, when her whole life's effort had been to forward their interests and to give them comfort? Suppose they should doubt her love; it would break her heart. How would any parent feel to be thus treated by his children? And how can our heavenly Father regard us when we distrust His love, which has led Him to give His only-begotten Son that we might have life? [Romans 8:32 quoted.] And yet how many, by their actions, if not in word, are saying, 'The Lord does not mean this for me. Perhaps He loves others, but He does not love me.'

"All this is harming your own soul; for every word of doubt you utter is inviting Satan's temptations; it is strengthening in you the tendency to doubt, and it is grieving from you the ministering angels. When Satan tempts you, breathe not a word of doubt or darkness." —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 118, 119.

3. A LOVING INVITATION

- a. **What did Isaiah reveal as God's plan for His wayward people? Isaiah 41:14; 48:4, 8–11.**
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“The heart of Infinite Love yearns after those who feel powerless to free themselves from the snares of Satan; and He graciously offers to strengthen them to live for Him. . . .

“The inhabitants of Judah were all undeserving, yet God would not give them up. By them His name was to be exalted among the heathen. Many who were wholly unacquainted with His attributes were yet to behold the glory of the divine character. It was for the purpose of making plain His merciful designs that He kept sending His servants the prophets with the message, ‘Turn ye again now everyone from his evil way’ (Jeremiah 25:5). . . .

“The call to repentance was sounded with unmistakable clearness, and all were invited to return.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 316, 319.

- b. **What glorious assurances are given to each one of us if we would only accept them? Isaiah 55:6, 7; 44:21, 22.**
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“Have you, reader, chosen your own way? Have you wandered far from God? Have you sought to feast upon the fruits of transgression, only to find them turn to ashes upon your lips? And now, your life plans thwarted and your hopes dead, do you sit alone and desolate? That voice which has long been speaking to your heart, but to which you would not listen, comes to you distinct and clear, ‘Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction’ (Micah 2:10). Return to your Father's house. . . .

“Do not listen to the enemy's suggestion to stay away from Christ until you have made yourself better, until you are good enough to come to God. If you wait until then you will never come. When Satan points to your filthy garments, repeat the promise of the Saviour, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out’ (John 6:37). Tell the enemy that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 319, 320.

4. HUMBLE BEFORE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER

- a. Explain the transition God wants His people to make from idolatry and pride, to become children of one heavenly Father. Isaiah 57:13–21.
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“Let not pride, or self-esteem, or self-righteousness keep anyone from confessing his sins, that he may claim the promise: ‘He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy’ (Proverbs 28:13). Keep nothing back from God, and neglect not the confession of your faults to the brethren when they have a connection with them. . . .

“It is a lamentable fact that the erring heart is unwilling to be criticized, or to subject itself to humiliation by the confession of sin. Some see their faults, but thinking confession will detract from their dignity, they excuse their wrong, and shield themselves from the discipline that confession would give to the soul. . . . They see the errors of others; but how can they have courage to give the advice, ‘Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed,’ when they have failed to follow this instruction in their own lives? How much will ministers or people learn of a truth which they thrust aside, and forget if possible, because it is not agreeable; because it does not flatter their pride, but reproveth and pains? . . . They must hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ, the illumination of the Holy Spirit.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 239, 240.

- b. How can we better cooperate with the Holy Spirit to be part of the Lord’s great plan? Isaiah 59:20, 21.
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“Sin must not be cherished. This is a time when the love of many is waxing cold, and any defection on your part may encourage others in a wrong course, and lead to many and grievous transgressions. Do not set an example of lukewarmness; do not turn away from testimonies of the Spirit of God. We are entrusted with a solemn message to give to the world, and there is much at stake. We cannot be safe amid the temptations that surround us in these times of peril, without constantly watching unto prayer. We must guard against accepting a low standard of our own instead of the high Bible standard of character.”—*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 462.

5. LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS

- a. **What gracious invitation given to the inhabitants of Judah echoes down to us today? Isaiah 27:5.**

“It is Satan’s special device to lead man into sin, and then leave him, helpless and trembling, fearing to seek for pardon. But why should we fear. . . . Every provision has been made for our infirmities, every encouragement offered us to come to Christ. . . .

“Christ has pledged Himself to be our substitute and surety, and He neglects no one. He who could not see human beings exposed to eternal ruin without pouring out His soul unto death in their behalf, will look with pity and compassion upon every soul who realizes that he cannot save himself.

“He will look upon no trembling suppliant without raising him up. He who through His own atonement provided for man an infinite fund of moral power, will not fail to employ this power in our behalf. We may take our sins and sorrows to His feet; for He loves us.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 156, 157.

- b. **With what words does Isaiah describe the experience that is to be ours? Isaiah 12:1–6.**

“Oh, how many times has your heart been touched with the beauty of the Saviour’s countenance, charmed with the loveliness of His character, and subdued with the thought of His suffering. Now He wants you to lean your whole weight upon Him.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 232.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why was Isaiah able to minister to his people with hope?
2. How are we to avoid being duped by common misconceptions about God?
3. Why does God bother to call proud, stubborn people to repentance?
4. We may confess our sins to God, but how is James 5:16 often neglected?
5. Despite Satan’s claims, why did God want us to study this week’s lesson?

First Sabbath Offering for Missionary Schools and Education Projects

“Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education



to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought. . . . Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions.”—*Education*, pp. 17, 18.

It is the purpose of the Education Department to support the establishment of such institutions. Schools for General Education and Missionary Schools are needed now more than ever for the education of our children. Over a century ago, the Lord’s messenger wrote, “Much more can be done to save and educate the children of those who at present cannot get away from the cities. This is a matter worthy of our best efforts. Church schools are to be established for the children in the cities, and in connection with these schools provision is to be made for the teaching of higher studies, where these are called for.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 306.

“Wherever there are a few Sabbathkeepers, the parents should unite in providing a place for a day school where their children and youth can be instructed. They should employ a Christian teacher, who, as a consecrated missionary, shall educate the children in such a way as to lead them to become missionaries. . . .

“If parents will realize the importance of these small educating centers, cooperating to do the work that the Lord desires to be done at this time, the plans of the enemy for our children will be frustrated.”—*Ibid.*, p. 307.

We appeal to you this Sabbath to give generously to support this work in all of our churches throughout the world.

Your brethren from the GC Education Department

Unbelief by Confederacy

“Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (Isaiah 8:12, 13).

“[God] calls for men who will remain separate from the enemies of the truth. He calls for men who will not dare to resort to the arm of flesh by entering into partnership with worldlings in order to secure means for advancing His work—even for the building of institutions.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 290.

Suggested Reading: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 183–200.

Sunday

July 31

1. EXTREME APOSTASY

- a. Explain the extent of the adverse conditions that God’s faithful few faced during the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. 2 Chronicles 28:1–4. How did Micah describe the situation? Micah 7:2, 4.

“The accession of Ahaz to the throne brought Isaiah and his associates face to face with conditions more appalling than any that had hitherto existed in the realm of Judah. Many who had formerly withstood the seductive influence of idolatrous practices were now being persuaded to take part in the worship of heathen deities. Princes in Israel were proving untrue to their trust; false prophets were arising with messages to lead astray; even some of the priests were teaching for hire. Yet the leaders in apostasy still kept up the forms of divine worship and claimed to be numbered among the people of God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 322.

“‘They which lead thee,’ . . . ‘cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths’ (Isaiah 3:12). During the reign of Ahaz this was literally true. . . .

“The forces for good were rapidly diminishing, the forces for evil multiplying.”—*Ibid.*, p. 324.

2. AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE

- a. **What did God appeal during the crisis in Ahaz's time? Micah 6:1–5. How did He depict the situation, and what did He do about it? Isaiah 28:5–13.**
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“In every age, for the sake of those who have remained true, as well as because of His infinite love for the erring, God has borne long with the rebellious, and has urged them to forsake their course of evil and return to Him. ‘Precept upon precept; line upon line, . . . here a little, and there a little,’ through men of His appointment, He has taught transgressors the way of righteousness (Isaiah 28:10).

“And thus it was during the reign of Ahaz. Invitation upon invitation was sent to erring Israel to return to their allegiance to Jehovah. Tender were the pleadings of the prophets; and as they stood before the people, earnestly exhorting to repentance and reformation, their words bore fruit to the glory of God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 324, 325.

- b. **While Ahaz ignored the appeals of the prophets and continued in his idolatrous course, what finally frightened him? 2 Kings 16:5. Why did God allow this to happen? 2 Chronicles 29:6–8.**
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“Had Ahaz and the chief men of his realm been true servants of the Most High, they would have had no fear of so unnatural an alliance as had been formed against them. But repeated transgression had shorn them of strength. Stricken with a nameless dread of the retributive judgments of an offended God, the heart of the king ‘was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind’ (Isaiah 7:2).”—*Ibid.*, pp. 328, 329.

- c. **What message was then given to Ahaz at this crucial moment? Isaiah 7:4–9. How did the king respond? 2 Kings 16:6–8.**
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“Well would it have been for the kingdom of Judah had Ahaz received [Isaiah’s] message as from heaven. But choosing to lean on the arm of flesh, he sought help from the heathen.”—*Ibid.*, p. 329.

3. HOPE AT THE DARKEST HOUR

- a. **What warnings should we take from the bitter results of Ahaz's alliance with Assyria? 2 Chronicles 28:14–23.**

“The tribute [Ahaz] offered aroused the cupidity of Assyria, and that treacherous nation soon threatened to overflow and spoil Judah. Ahaz and his unhappy subjects were now harassed by the fear of falling completely into the hands of the cruel Assyrians.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 329.

- b. **What was the worst part of Ahaz's apostasy? 2 Chronicles 28:24–27.**

“As the apostate king neared the end of his reign, he caused the doors of the temple to be closed. The sacred services were interrupted. No longer were the candlesticks kept burning before the altar. No longer were offerings made for the sins of the people. No longer did sweet incense ascend on high at the time of the morning and the evening sacrifice. Deserting the courts of the house of God and locking fast its doors, the inhabitants of the godless city boldly set up altars for the worship of heathen deities on the street corners throughout Jerusalem. Heathenism had seemingly triumphed; the powers of darkness had well-nigh prevailed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 330.

- c. **Why are confederacies so dangerous—and what can we learn from Isaiah's message of hope to the remnant? Isaiah 8:9–14.**

“In Judah there dwelt some who maintained their allegiance to Jehovah, steadfastly refusing to be led into idolatry. It was to these that Isaiah and Micah and their associates looked in hope as they surveyed the ruin wrought during the last years of Ahaz. Their sanctuary was closed, but the faithful ones were assured: ‘God is with us’ (Isaiah 8:10).”—*Ibid.*

“The question has been asked, What do you mean by a confederacy? Who have formed confederacies? You know what a confederacy is—a union of men in a work that does not bear the stamp of pure, straightforward, unswerving integrity.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1142.

4. A TIMELESS PRINCIPLE

- a. **What warnings, if heeded, will protect us from the mistake of forming alliances with those who do not adhere to the present truth? Isaiah 31:1–3.**
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“Satan is moving with his power from beneath to inspire men to form alliances and confederacies of evil against light and against the Word of God. Infidelity, papacy, and semi-papacy are coming in close and powerful companionship with professed Christianity. The low views of inspiration, the exalting of human ideas from men called wise, are placing human talent above the divine wisdom and forms, and science so-called above the power of vital godliness. These are the signs of the last days.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 345.

“All need wisdom carefully to search out the mystery of iniquity that figures so largely in the winding up of this earth’s history. God’s presentation of the detestable works of the inhabitants of the ruling powers of the world who bind themselves into secret societies and confederacies, not honoring the law of God, should enable the people who have the light of truth to keep clear of all these evils. More and more will all false religionists of the world manifest their evil doings; for there are but two parties, those who keep the commandments of God and those who war against God’s holy law.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 322.

- b. **What Bible principle warns against confederacies? 2 Corinthians 6:14–18.**
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“The wicked are being bound up in bundles, bound up in trusts, in unions, in confederacies. Let us have nothing to do with these organizations. God is our Ruler, our Governor, and He calls us to come out from the world and be separate. . . . If we refuse to do this, if we continue to link up with the world, and to look at every matter from a worldly standpoint, we shall become like the world. When worldly policy and worldly ideas govern our transactions, we cannot stand on the high and holy platform of eternal truth.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1142.

“The trades unions and confederacies of the world are a snare. Keep out of them, and away from them, brethren. Have nothing to do with them. Because of these unions and confederacies, it will soon be very difficult for our institutions to carry on their work in the cities.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 142.

5. A FAR-REACHING CONCEPT

- a. How does Inspiration depict the bustle of city life and the alliances it requires—in contrast to the peaceful existence God wants for His people? Nahum 2:4; Lamentations 5:4; Isaiah 32:17–19.

“It is God’s design that our people should locate outside the cities, and from these outposts warn the cities, and raise in them memorials for God. There must be a force of influence in the cities, that the message of warning shall be heard.

“For years the warning has been given to our people, Get out of Battle Creek. But because of the many interests established there, it was convenient to remain, and men could not see why they should move. . . . Take the school out of Battle Creek if you can possibly do so. Go out into a place where there are no people who believe as we do, and there establish the school on a location with plenty of land, that the students who come may be educated in right lines. [Brn. Spalding and Magan] obeyed the instruction given. This was the first move made. It has been a success. God has been pleased with it.”—*The General Conference Bulletin*, April 6, 1903.

“In God’s plan for Israel every family had a home on the land, with sufficient ground for tilling. Thus were provided both the means and the incentive for a useful, industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of men has ever improved upon that plan.

“The earth has blessings hidden in her depths for those who have courage and will and perseverance to gather her treasures. Fathers and mothers who possess a piece of land and a comfortable home are kings and queens.

“An expensive dwelling, elaborate furnishings, display, luxury, and ease, do not furnish the conditions essential to a happy, useful life.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 260.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How far into apostasy did Ahaz lead the people of Judah?
2. In what ways did Ahaz’s alliance with Assyria show serious unbelief?
3. When the temple services ceased, how did God comfort the faithful?
4. What is the real problem with alliances?
5. Why is country living good for our faith—especially nowadays?

Hezekiah

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

“Every day, our words and acts are making impressions upon those with whom we associate. How great the need that we set a watch upon our lips and guard carefully our steps!”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 348.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 331–348.

Sunday

August 7

1. HOPE RENEWED

- a. What did Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, realize when he became king of Judah? 2 Chronicles 29:1, 6–9. What were his first steps? 2 Chronicles 29:2–5, 10.

“Hezekiah came to the throne determined to do all in his power to save Judah from the fate that was overtaking the northern kingdom. The messages of the prophets offered no encouragement to halfway measures. Only by most decided reformation could the threatened judgments be averted.

“In the crisis, Hezekiah proved to be a man of opportunity. No sooner had he ascended the throne than he began to plan and to execute. He first turned his attention to the restoration of the temple services, so long neglected.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 331.

- b. What appeal did God direct to Judah? Isaiah 31:6. How did the “goodly remnant” respond? Micah 7:7–9; 2 Chronicles 29:16–20, 27–31, 35, 36.

“God had indeed prepared the hearts of the chief men of Judah to lead out in a decided reformatory movement, that the tide of apostasy might be stayed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 333.

2. THE JOY OF REFORMATION

- a. **What prophetic prayer, previously offered at the dedication of the temple, was fulfilled in the reformation of Hezekiah? 1 Kings 8:33, 34; 2 Chronicles 7:14.**
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“[1 Kings 8:33, 34 quoted.] The seal of divine approval had been placed upon this prayer; for at its close fire had come down from heaven to consume the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord had filled the temple. See 2 Chronicles 7:1. And by night the Lord had appeared to Solomon to tell him that his prayer had been heard, and that mercy would be shown those who should worship there. . . . These promises met abundant fulfillment during the reformation under Hezekiah.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 335.

- b. **Describe the success of Hezekiah’s reformation. 2 Chronicles 30:1, 9–13, 21–23, 26, 27.**
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“The seven days usually allotted to the Passover feast passed all too quickly, and the worshipers determined to spend another seven days in learning more fully the way of the Lord. The teaching priests continued their work of instruction from the book of the law; daily the people assembled at the temple to offer their tribute of praise and thanksgiving; and as the great meeting drew to a close, it was evident that God had wrought marvelously in the conversion of backsliding Judah and in stemming the tide of idolatry which threatened to sweep all before it. The solemn warnings of the prophets had not been uttered in vain.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 337, 338.

- c. **After the Passover, what further steps marked the genuineness of Hezekiah’s reformation? 2 Chronicles 31:1, 5, 6. How was his administration described? Verses 20, 21; 2 Kings 18:4–7.**
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“The reign of Hezekiah was characterized by a series of remarkable providences which revealed to the surrounding nations that the God of Israel was with His people.”—*Ibid.*, p. 339.

3. MERCY AND A MISSION

- a. **What message came to Hezekiah when he was sick, and how was he shown mercy? 2 Kings 20:1–7. How did he express thanks? Isaiah 38:9–20.**
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“Restored to his wonted strength, the king of Judah acknowledged in words of song the mercies of Jehovah, and vowed to spend his remaining days in willing service to the King of kings. His grateful recognition of God’s compassionate dealing with him is an inspiration to all who desire to spend their years to the glory of their Maker.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 342.

- b. **Through what sign did God confirm His promise to Hezekiah, and what reaction did this spark in a faraway land? 2 Kings 20:8–12.**
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“In the fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates there dwelt an ancient race which, though at that time subject to Assyria, was destined to rule the world. Among its people were wise men who gave much attention to the study of astronomy; and when they noticed that the shadow on the sundial had been turned back ten degrees, they marveled greatly. Their king, Merodachbaladan, upon learning that this miracle had been wrought as a sign to the king of Judah that the God of heaven had granted him a new lease of life, sent ambassadors to Hezekiah to congratulate him on his recovery and to learn, if possible, more of the God who was able to perform so great a wonder.

“The visit of these messengers from the ruler of a faraway land gave Hezekiah an opportunity to extol the living God. How easy it would have been for him to tell them of God, the upholder of all created things, through whose favor his own life had been spared when all other hope had fled! What momentous transformations might have taken place had these seekers after truth from the plains of Chaldea been led to acknowledge the supreme sovereignty of the living God!”—*Ibid.*, p. 344.

- c. **What can we learn from the missionary opportunity God gave Hezekiah? Colossians 4:5; Revelation 3:18 (last part).**
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“Eyes need to be anointed with the heavenly eyesalve to see and sense their opportunities.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 130.

4. A BIG MISTAKE

- a. What mistake tarnished Hezekiah's good record? 2 Chronicles 32:25, 31; Isaiah 39:1–4.
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“Pride and vanity took possession of Hezekiah's heart, and in self-exaltation he laid open to covetous eyes the treasures with which God had enriched His people. . . . [Isaiah 39:2 quoted.] Not to glorify God did he do this, but to exalt himself in the eyes of the foreign princes. He did not stop to consider that these men were representatives of a powerful nation that had not the fear nor the love of God in their hearts, and that it was imprudent to make them his confidants concerning the temporal riches of the nation.

“The visit of the ambassadors to Hezekiah was a test of his gratitude and devotion. . . . [2 Chronicles 32:31 quoted.] Had Hezekiah improved the opportunity given him to bear witness to the power, the goodness, the compassion, of the God of Israel, the report of the ambassadors would have been as light piercing darkness. But he magnified himself above the Lord of hosts. He ‘rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up’ (verse 25).

“How disastrous the results which were to follow! To Isaiah it was revealed that the returning ambassadors were carrying with them a report of the riches they had seen, and that the king of Babylon and his counselors would plan to enrich their own country with the treasures of Jerusalem. Hezekiah had grievously sinned; ‘therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem’ (verse 25).”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 344–346.

- b. What news did Isaiah need to tell Hezekiah—and how did the king show repentance for his imprudence? Isaiah 39:5–8; 2 Chronicles 32:26.
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“During his remaining years the king of Judah was to have much prosperity because of his steadfast purpose to redeem the past and to bring honor to the name of the God whom he served; yet his faith was to be severely tried, and he was to learn that only by putting his trust fully in Jehovah could he hope to triumph over the powers of darkness that were plotting his ruin and the utter destruction of his people.”—*Ibid.*, p. 347.

5. ALWAYS READY IN MEEKNESS

- a. What should we all learn from Hezekiah's experience with the Babylonian ambassadors? Psalm 141:3; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Peter 3:15.
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"The story of Hezekiah's failure to prove true to his trust at the time of the visit of the ambassadors is fraught with an important lesson for all. Far more than we do, we need to speak of the precious chapters in our experience, of the mercy and loving-kindness of God, of the matchless depths of the Saviour's love. . . .

"Every day, our words and acts are making impressions upon those with whom we associate. How great the need that we set a watch upon our lips and guard carefully our steps! One reckless movement, one imprudent step, and the surging waves of some strong temptation may sweep a soul into the downward path. . . .

"On the other hand, if by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same beneficial influence over others. Thus hundreds and thousands are helped by our unconscious influence."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 347, 348.

"When the Lord's voice calls, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' the Divine Spirit puts it into hearts to respond: 'Here am I; send me' (Isaiah 6:8). But bear in mind that the live coal from the altar must first touch your lips. Then the words you speak will be wise and holy words. Then you will have wisdom to know what to say and what to leave unsaid. . . .

"[1 Peter 3:15 quoted.] Why fear? Fear lest your words should savor of self-importance, lest unadvised words be spoken, lest the words and manner should not be after Christ's likeness. Connect firmly with Christ and present the truth as it is in Him."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 325.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why can we be inspired by the proactive approach of Ahaz's heir?
2. Why was Hezekiah's reign crowned with joy and success?
3. Besides helping Judah's king, whom else was God seeking to draw?
4. What did Hezekiah forget when the ambassadors came to visit?
5. When seeking to witness for God, why do we need to be watchful?

Pride and Humility

“Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

“The pride of Assyria and its fall are to serve as an object lesson to the end of time.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 366.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 349–366.

Sunday

August 14

1. FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP

- a. **With what reasoning did Hezekiah encourage his people to face the Assyrians—and how had the words of Isaiah helped in this crisis? 2 Chronicles 32:7, 8 (first part); Isaiah 12:6.**

“At the time of Hezekiah’s accession to the throne of Judah, the Assyrians had already carried captive a large number of the children of Israel from the northern kingdom; and a few years after he had begun to reign, and while he was still strengthening the defenses of Jerusalem, the Assyrians besieged and captured Samaria and scattered the ten tribes among the many provinces of the Assyrian realm. The borders of Judah were only a few miles distant, with Jerusalem less than fifty miles away; and the rich spoils to be found within the temple would tempt the enemy to return. But the king of Judah had determined to do his part in preparing to resist the enemy.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 351.

- b. **Why could Hezekiah trust in God’s help? Isaiah 10:12, 24–27; 14: 24–27. How did the people respond to his appeal? 2 Chronicles 32:8 (last part).**

“Nothing more quickly inspires faith than the exercise of faith. The king of Judah had prepared for the coming storm; and now, confident that the prophecy against the Assyrians would be fulfilled, he stayed his soul upon God.”—*Ibid.*

2. THE CRISIS ARRIVES

- a. When, to all appearances, the prospects seemed hopeless for Judah, how did the Assyrian officers make things even worse? Isaiah 36:13–20.
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“The long-expected crisis finally came. The forces of Assyria, advancing from triumph to triumph, appeared in Judea. Confident of victory, the leaders divided their forces into two armies, one of which was to meet the Egyptian army to the southward, while the other was to besiege Jerusalem.

“Judah’s only hope was now in God. All possible help from Egypt had been cut off, and no other nations were near to lend a friendly hand.

“The Assyrian officers, sure of the strength of their disciplined forces, arranged for a conference with the chief men of Judah, during which they insolently demanded the surrender of the city. This demand was accompanied by blasphemous revilings against the God of the Hebrews. Because of the weakness and apostasy of Israel and Judah, the name of God was no longer feared among the nations, but had become a subject for continual reproach.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 352.

- b. How did Judah respond to the taunts of the haughty Assyrians—and what does this experience remind us about attitude? Isaiah 36:21, 22; 37:1–4.
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“The same masterful mind that plotted against the faithful in ages past is still seeking to rid the earth of those who fear God and obey His law. . . . 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.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 450.

“When persons meet together for the investigation of points of faith concerning which there is a difference of opinion, the spirit which controls them will be manifested. Those who are standing in defense of truth should be calm and self-possessed. If they have the mind of Christ, they will be kind and courteous. They will not be betrayed into the use of harsh language. They will not regard themselves as infallible, nor look with contempt upon those who differ with them. They will not regard them as enemies, nor meet them with ridicule or jesting.”—*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 389.

3. FAITH UNDER BLEAK CIRCUMSTANCES

- a. At the peak of Judah's crisis with Assyria, what message did God give to Hezekiah through Isaiah? 2 Kings 19:5–7. Why are these great historical experiences so important for us to contemplate?
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“God would have us recall His dealings with His people in the past to save them from their enemies. He has always chosen extremities, when there seemed no possible chance for deliverance from Satan's workings, for the manifestation of His power. Man's necessity is God's opportunity.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 714.

“Not in freedom from trial, but in the midst of it, is Christian character developed. Exposure to rebuffs and opposition leads the follower of Christ to greater watchfulness and more earnest prayer to the mighty Helper. Severe trial endured by the grace of God develops patience, vigilance, fortitude, and a deep and abiding trust in God. It is the triumph of the Christian faith that it enables its followers to suffer and be strong; to submit, and thus to conquer; to be killed all the day long, and yet to live; to bear the cross, and thus to win the crown of glory.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 467, 468.

“Those who are finally victorious will have seasons of terrible perplexity and trial in their religious life; but they must not cast away their confidence, for this is a part of their discipline in the school of Christ, and it is essential in order that all dross may be purged away.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 63.

- b. During this crisis, what did Isaiah and Hezekiah do? 2 Chronicles 32:20; 2 Kings 19:14–19.
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“Hezekiah's pleadings in behalf of Judah and of the honor of their Supreme Ruler were in harmony with the mind of God. Solomon, in his benediction at the dedication of the temple, had prayed the Lord to maintain ‘the cause of His people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else’ (1 Kings 8:59, 60). Especially was the Lord to show favor when, in times of war or of oppression by an army, the chief men of Israel should enter the house of prayer and plead for deliverance.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 359.

4. GOD OVERRULES FOR JUSTICE' SAKE

- a. **What reassurance did the Lord send to the king and people of Judah? 2 Kings 19:20–22, 28, 32–34. What should we learn from the way God supplied their needs, though their land was laid waste? Verse 29.**

“As were God’s people anciently, so we should be prepared to advance when the cloud rises and moves forward, and to halt when the cloud stops. We must adjust our movements to the guidance of God’s Spirit. In the place of following ways of our own devising, we are to cooperate with divinity. Thus we shall be enabled to keep pace with our Leader.

“In order to be a Christian, it is not necessary for a man to have great talents. The human agent may have no voice in legislative councils; he may not be permitted to deliberate in senates or vote in parliaments; yet he has access to God. The King of kings bends low to listen to the prayer coming from one who desires to do the Master’s will. An earnest prayer offered from a sincere, contrite heart is of more value in God’s sight than is eloquence of speech. God hears every prayer offered with the incense of faith. His weakest child may exert an influence in harmony with the councils of heaven. It is in answer to prayer that God revives His work.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 23, 1903.

- b. **In what sense does the fate of Assyria present a general principle for every age? Isaiah 30:27, 28; Proverbs 11:17; 16:18.**

“With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps account with the nations. While his mercy is tendered with calls to repentance, this account remains open; but when the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed, the ministry of his wrath begins. The account is closed. Divine patience ceases. Mercy no longer pleads in their behalf.”—*Ibid.*, June 3, 1915.

“The pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away’ (Zechariah 10:11). This is true not only of the nations that arrayed themselves against God in ancient times, but also of nations today who fail of fulfilling the divine purpose. In the day of final awards, when the righteous Judge of all the earth shall ‘sift the nations’ (Isaiah 30:28), and those that have kept the truth shall be permitted to enter the City of God, heaven’s arches will ring with the triumphant songs of the redeemed.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 366.

5. HUMBLING THE PRIDE IN OURSELVES

- a. What practical lessons should we derive from the experience involving Hezekiah, Isaiah, and the Assyrians? 1 Peter 5:5–7; Proverbs 16:18.

“There are many ways in which God can punish, and punishment will surely follow wherever pride is indulged. . . . Let a man be lifted up by a sense of his own ability, and trust in his human strength, and he will surely be overcome by temptation. God will bring him down. He will teach him his utter weakness, that he may feel his need of divine aid.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, pp. 332, 333.

“We should humble ourselves daily before God, and not feel that our wisdom is perfect. We should take hold of the work with earnestness. We should not pray for God to humble us; for when God takes hold of us, He will humble us in a way that we would not enjoy. But we must day by day humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and with trembling. While it is God that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we are to cooperate with Him while He works through us. We must guard against lifting up our souls in self-esteem. But you will say, How am I to know that Christ is in my heart? If, when you are criticized or corrected in your way, and things do not go just as you think they ought to go—if then you let your passion arise instead of bearing the correction and being patient and kind, Christ is not abiding in the heart.

“Christ placed such a value upon man that He gave His own life to redeem him; and He requires every power and faculty of our being to be in perfect subjection to Him. But we are not to esteem ourselves only in the light in which God esteemed us by the cross of Calvary. Let us not be afraid to show our humility by kindness, courteousness, and forbearance. Do not let self arise and think, It is *I* they are trying to hurt by their false reports.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 12, 1887.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did Hezekiah rise to the occasion in the face of the Assyrian threat?
2. How should we respond to the “Sennacheribs” in our life?
3. In the crisis Judah faced, how did God honor His ancient covenant?
4. What can we learn from the way Assyria’s apparent prosperity melted?
5. Name a few litmus tests that reveal our individual level of humility.

Humanity Held Accountable

“At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 17:7).

“Each one of us should stand where we realize our responsibility and accountability to the God of heaven. When we realize this, Divine blessing will rest upon us.”—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, July 28, 1899.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 686–694.

Sunday

August 21

1. PRIDE AND PRESUMPTION CONDEMNED

a. Just as the Assyrians were brought to judgment, what did Isaiah prophesy would happen to haughty Babylon? Isaiah 13:1, 4–6, 17–22; 47:1–3, 7–9. When did the great city indeed meet her doom? Daniel 5:1, 18–23, 28, 30.

b. Explain the parallel that the Lord declares will soon come upon spiritual Babylon. Revelation 18:1, 2, 7–17; Ezekiel 7:9.

c. Why should everyone be watchful in this regard? Proverbs 15:3.

“The eye of the Lord is upon every scene. . . . To every word and action of our lives, the holy, sin-hating God stands as a witness. We cannot escape our accountability to Him, for God is everywhere. Why should we not live in such a manner that we may render up our account with joy, and not with grief. God has given us our appointed work, and we are to do it under his direction. If we place our powers under the control of Satan, we are rebels against God, and there will be found in our life-records, as there was found in Belshazzar’s, a fatal deficiency when the accounts are balanced.”—*The Signs of the Times*, September 14, 1888.

2. DEPENDING MORE ON GOD, LESS ON SOCIETY

- a. In the hustle and bustle of city life in modern society, of what warnings must we be ever mindful? Isaiah 17:12–14. For example, what was the Lord’s last-day messenger bidden to write regarding one city (in this case, Melbourne, Australia) having less than half a million people when she was alive?

“It is not God’s will that His people shall settle in the cities, where there is constant turmoil and confusion. Their children should be spared this; for the whole system is demoralized by the hurry and rush and noise.

“The Lord desires His people to move into the country, where they can settle on the land and raise their own fruit and vegetables, and where their children can be brought in direct contact with the works of God in nature. Take your families away from the cities, is my message.”—*Medical Ministry*, pp. 310, 311.

“The cities will become worse and worse. In them will be strife and bloodshed, and at last they will be visited by earthquakes. Buildings will be thrown down, and will be consumed by fire from heaven. . . .

“Will our brethren and sisters in Melbourne move without the counsel of God? Will they make large plants in Melbourne, when the world is growing worse and worse, when the cities are becoming as Sodom and Gomorrah? Will they put out the eyes of the people, that they shall not discern the signs of the times?

“The cities must be worked. Those who are living in them must be warned of what is before us. Let time and means be wisely spent. See if you cannot do something in the highways and byways of the cities to proclaim the message of present truth. But do not locate your families in the city, and do not establish business interests there. If you do this, you will in the future be expected to conform to the observance of various holidays. Watchers will be set to seek occasion of complaint against the commandment-keeping people of God. Satan will exercise his power and enmity, and oppression will be the result. The larger the city, the greater will be the oppression. At such a time as this, shall we invest our money and our time in business enterprises in the cities, when they are so much needed to advance the work in new fields? Let those who can teach the truth go forth into the highways and hedges, and compel men and women to come in, that God’s house may be full.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, pp. 336, 337.

- b. Instead of leaning on an arm of flesh, where are we to look? Isaiah 17:7, 8.

3. CONSECRATION IN THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

- a. What does God declare about the eating of “clean” flesh foods in the antitypical Day of Atonement? Isaiah 22:12–14, 20–22 (compare Revelation 3:8, 7). When the Lord’s messenger was taken off into vision, what was revealed about this “open” and “shut” door?
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“The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us, and I was taken off in the Spirit to the city of the living God. Then I was shown that the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ relating to the shut door could not be separated, and that the time for the commandments of God to shine out with all their importance, and for God’s people to be tried on the Sabbath truth, was when the door was opened in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary, where the ark is, in which are contained the ten commandments. This door was not opened until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the holy place of the sanctuary in 1844. Then Jesus rose up and shut the door of the holy place, and opened the door into the most holy, and passed within the second veil, where He now stands by the ark, and where the faith of Israel now reaches.

“I saw that Jesus had shut the door of the holy place, and no man can open it; and that He had opened the door into the most holy, and no man can shut it (Revelation 3:7,8); and that since Jesus has opened the door into the most holy place, which contains the ark, the commandments have been shining out to God’s people, and they are being tested on the Sabbath question.”—*Early Writings*, p. 42.

- b. What is our most urgent duty in view of the time in which we live? Isaiah 34:16. Summarize the mission of the Lord’s messenger for our time and explain why it has been so important.
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“I have not come to cry peace; you can hear this voice wherever you go. There are those who will be glad to lull you to sleep in your carnal security; but I have a different work. My message is to alarm you, to bid you reform your lives, and cease your rebellion against the God of the universe. Take the Word of God, and see if you are in harmony with it. Is your character such as will bear the search of the heavenly investigation?”—*The Review and Herald*, June 22, 1911.

4. AN ANCHOR AMID THE WINDS OF DOCTRINE

- a. How can we stand firm for Christ in an age when people tend to question God and His wisdom? Isaiah 29:13–16; 30:8–11.
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“Never was there a time when the Lord would manifest His great grace unto His chosen ones more fully than in these last days when His law is made void.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 96.

“The Lord calls upon every teacher, every minister, everyone who has received the light of His truth to mark well his spiritual standing. They have had great light, and if they would secure eternal life, they must no longer make finite men their dependence but build upon the sure foundation.”—*Ibid.*, p. 384.

- b. What is to be our safeguard in times of religious delusion? Isaiah 8:19, 20.
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“There is no concord between Christ and Belial. The nonresurrection of the wicked and their peculiar views of the age to come are gross errors which Satan has worked in among the last-day heresies to serve his own purpose to ruin souls. These errors can have no harmony with the message of heavenly origin.

“Some of these persons have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver. Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church. Some have been deceived here. The fruits of all this have not been good. ‘Ye shall know them by their fruits’ (Matthew 7:16). Fanaticism and noise have been considered special evidences of faith. Some are not satisfied with a meeting unless they have a powerful and happy time. They work for this and get up an excitement of feeling. But the influence of such meetings is not beneficial. When the happy flight of feeling is gone, they sink lower than before the meeting because their happiness did not come from the right source. The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, and earnestly, and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 411, 412.

5. STAYING FAR AWAY FROM ERROR

- a. Today, as “New Age” spiritualistic philosophy and religion seem to prosper and run rampant, what must we keep in mind? Isaiah 47:10–15.

“All should feel the necessity of keeping the moral nature braced by constant watchfulness. Like faithful sentinels, they should guard the citadel of the soul, never feeling that they may relax their vigilance for a moment. In earnest prayer and living faith is their only safety.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 411.

“In earthly affairs, the servant who seeks most carefully to fulfill the requirements of his office, and to carry out the will of his master, is most highly valued. A gentlemen once wished to employ a trusty coachman. Several men came in answer to his advertisement. He asked each one how near he could drive to the edge of a certain precipice without upsetting the carriage. One and another replied that he could go within a very perilous distance; but at last one answered that he would keep as far as possible from such a dangerous undertaking. He was employed to fill the position. Shall a man be more appreciative of a good servant than is our Heavenly Father? Our anxiety should not be to see how far we can depart from the commandments of the Lord, and presume on the mercy of the Lawgiver, and still flatter our souls that we are within the bounds of God’s forbearance; but our care should be to keep as far as possible from transgression. We should be determined to be on the side of Christ and our Heavenly Father, and run no risks by heady presumption.

“Today, while the last message is being heralded to bring God’s servants in harmony with every precept of His law, there will be scoffers and unbelievers; but every soul must stand in his own integrity. As Noah was faithful in warning the antediluvian world, so we must be faithful to the great trust that God has given us. Although there are scoffers and traducers on every side, we must not shrink from presenting the truth of heaven to this generation.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 22, 1911.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. While spiritual Babylon seems to flourish, what should we remember?
2. What steps can I take to simplify my lifestyle and be less worldly-minded?
3. What evidence in Isaiah connects vegetarianism with God’s remnant?
4. How does Heaven refute a key tenet of the Charismatic movement?
5. Explain the safest policy when error abounds on every hand.

First Sabbath Offering for a sanitarium in Baños, Ecuador

Ecuador is a country of South America. Its capital is Quito. Of the 15.49 million inhabitants, 80.40% adhere to the Catholic religion and 11.30% identify as Protestants.

The message of reformation came to Ecuador in 1945 through the efforts of Mario Linares. The work of the Reform Movement, as an organization, was legally established in 1973. At the moment there are 17 churches and 3 groups. Through the blessings of God, the work has grown significantly and four ministers of the gospel were ordained in the past two years.

In our last business meeting of 2012 we decided to build a sanitarium based on the counsel we find in the Spirit of Prophecy.

“The Lord has ordained that sanitariums be established in many places to stand as memorials for Him. This is one of His chosen ways of proclaiming the third angel’s message.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 248.

In the same meeting, donations were made to support this project. A family generously donated land in Baños, the city chosen for the sanitarium. The Lord has given us qualified human resources: physicians, naturopaths, nutritionists, physiotherapists, and a brother who is doing his university thesis on this project. Our desire is to carry out this project with the blessings of God.

Baños de Agua Santa, better known as Baños, is a city in central Ecuador. There are several hot springs with a rich content of minerals, a large number of waterfalls, and various other natural attractions. Baños is characterized by its spring climate. It is the gateway to eastern Ecuador and provides a lush natural environment that makes it a point of destination for tourists from all over the world.

We believe that this sanitarium will be an effective way to spread the gospel in Ecuador, and we deeply appreciate your generous offerings for this purpose.

Your brothers and sisters from Ecuador



Guidance for the Meek

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21).

“Man is not left to become the sport of Satan’s temptations. . . . An Eye that never slumbers or sleeps is guarding the camp of Israel. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels are ministering to the needs of the children of men. Voices inspired by God are crying, This is the way, walk ye in it.”—*My Life Today*, p. 88.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 430–439, 508–516; *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 80–93.

Sunday

August 28

1. GOD’S CARE

- a. With what beautiful illustration does Isaiah depict God’s continual care for His vineyard—and how is this to touch our heart as His children? Isaiah 27:2, 3; Psalm 112:5–7.

“It is true the world is dark. Opposition may wax strong. The trifler and scorner may grow bolder and harder in their iniquity. Yet, for all this, we will not be moved. We have not run as uncertain. No, no. My heart is fixed, trusting in God. We have a whole Saviour. We can rejoice in His rich fullness.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 351.

“If we would only see and appreciate the Lord’s goodness and love and His unceasing care for us, how changed this world would be. If we would seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the principles of righteousness would guide our lives, and self-seeking would find no place in our hearts. The desire to do our own will would be submerged into the desire to do the will of God. We need to cherish a constant realization of God’s love and goodness. We need to remember that He holds us accountable for the use that we make of the gifts that He has bestowed on us.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 327.

2. SOBER VIGILANCE NEEDED

- a. **What has been shown to be blinding the eyes of the majority today, including the eyes of many professed Christians? Isaiah 29:9–12.**
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“I have been shown that the false shepherds were drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. The truth of God is sealed up to them; they cannot read it.”—*Early Writings*, p. 123.

- b. **How does this condition affect many that profess present truth while rejecting parts of it—and what warning accompanies this realization? Isaiah 29:13–16.**
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“The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God. He has also given them truths that none of these parties know, neither will they understand. Things which are sealed up to them, the Lord has opened to those who will see and are ready to understand. If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error.

“I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness.

“I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables. Our minds should not be thus diverted but should be occupied with the present truth.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 124, 125.

3. PROPHECIES REGARDING CERTAIN CLASSES

- a. What prophecy is given regarding the meek of the Lord in contrast to those who indulge a critical spirit against their brethren and sisters? Isaiah 29:18–21.
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“He who supposed himself secure in the love and friendship of his brother, finds himself mistrusted and his motives misjudged. . . .

“Floating rumors are frequently the destroyers of unity among brethren. There are some who watch with open mind and ears to catch flying scandal. They gather up little incidents which may be trifling in themselves, but which are repeated and exaggerated until a man is made an offender for a word. Their motto seems to be, ‘Report, and we will report it’ (Jeremiah 20:10). These tale bearers are doing the devil’s work with surprising fidelity, little knowing how offensive their course is to God. If they would spend half the energy and zeal that is given to this unholy work in examining their own hearts, they would find so much to do to cleanse their souls from impurity that they would have no time or disposition to criticize their brethren, and they would not fall under the power of this temptation. The door of the mind should be closed against ‘they say’ or ‘I have heard.’ Why should we not, instead of allowing jealousy or evil-surmising to come into our hearts, go to our brethren, and, after frankly but kindly setting before them the things we have heard detrimental to their character and influence, pray with and for them? While we cannot love and fellowship those who are the bitter enemies of Christ, we should cultivate that spirit of meekness and love that characterized our Master—a love that thinketh no evil and is not easily provoked.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1884.

- b. What encouraging prophecy is given for these last days with regard to earnest Jewish people who are honestly seeking God? Isaiah 29:22–24.
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“Among the Jews are some who, like Saul of Tarsus, are mighty in the Scriptures, and these will proclaim with wonderful power the immutability of the law of God. The God of Israel will bring this to pass in our day. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. As His servants labor in faith for those who have long been neglected and despised, His salvation will be revealed. [Isaiah 29:22–24 quoted.]”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 381, 382.

4. GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING TOWARD US ALL

- a. How was Isaiah bidden to address candidly the carnal tendency of God's professed people—and how does this apply to us today? Isaiah 30:8–16.

“We want to impress upon you the necessity of cleansing yourselves from every stain of sin. The church that Christ presents before the throne of His glory is without ‘spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing’ (Ephesians 5:27). Do you want to be among those who have washed their robes of character in the blood of the Lamb? then, ‘cease to do evil; learn to do well’ (Isaiah 1:16, 17); walk in the commandments and ordinances of your God blameless. You are not to ask whether it suits your convenience to keep the truth of heaven. You are to take up your cross and follow Jesus, cost what it may. You will find that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. When you broke His law and incurred the penalty of death, God did not spare his only begotten Son, that you might be brought from the path of transgression into the way of life and holiness; and will you neglect so great salvation, and refuse to comply with the conditions of eternal life?

“Make up your mind that from henceforth your feet shall go in the path of obedience. The darkness that binds you like a thick cloud, will part asunder, and heavenly light will shine upon all those who will have the truth at any cost.

“The Lord understands all about your trials; and however impossible it may seem to live for God, you will find that the way will appear. When your faith has been tested, as the Lord opened the Red Sea, so the waters will divide, and His providence will make a path for your feet. It is safe to serve God. It may not be to your worldly advantage to keep God's ways; but the transgressor will be at an eternal loss. . . .

“Our fathers have transgressed, and we have followed in their footsteps; but God has opened the book of the law, and backslidden Israel hear the commandments of the Lord. Their transgression stands revealed, and the wrath of God will be upon every soul that does not repent and reform as the light shines upon his pathway. . . .

“We must repent of the past evil of our doings, and seek God with all our hearts. We must believe that God means just what He says, and make no compromise with evil in any way. We should greatly humble ourselves before God, and consider any loss preferable to the loss of His favor.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 22, 1911.

- b. How has God manifested His great patience with us? Isaiah 30:18, 19.

5. HEEDING THE STILL, SMALL VOICE

- a. How does sincerity in the prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13), help us stay in safe paths? Isaiah 30:20, 21.
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“The master mind in the confederacy of evil is ever working to keep out of sight the words of God and to bring into full view the opinions of men. He means that we shall not hear the voice of God saying: ‘This is the way, walk ye in it’ (Isaiah 30:21). Through educational processes he is doing all in his power to obscure heaven’s light.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 305.

“The Lord desires all to understand that their prosperity is hid with Him in Christ; that it is dependent on their humility and meekness, their wholehearted obedience and devotion.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 212.

“In offering the prayer that Christ has given [in Matthew 6:13], we surrender ourselves to the guidance of God, asking Him to lead us in safe paths. We cannot offer this prayer in sincerity, and yet decide to walk in any way of our own choosing. We shall wait for His hand to lead us; we shall listen to His voice, saying, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it’ (Isaiah 30:21).

“It is not safe for us to linger to contemplate the advantages to be reaped through yielding to Satan’s suggestions. Sin means dishonor and disaster to every soul that indulges in it; but it is blinding and deceiving in its nature, and it will entice us with flattering presentations. If we venture on Satan’s ground we have no assurance of protection from his power. So far as in us lies, we should close every avenue by which the tempter may find access to us.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 117, 118.

- b. As we turn from our idols, what is God’s promise to us? Isaiah 30:22–26.
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PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In showering His blessings upon us, what does God want us to consider?
2. Why should we think twice before running to visit other denominations?
3. Why is it impossible for a truly meek person to gossip?
4. What is the preference of carnally-minded people who profess religion?
5. How only will God answer our prayers for guidance?

Compassion for the Penitent

“Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15).

“Nothing is more essential to communion with God than the most profound humility.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 50.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 42–44, 119–125, 421–424.

Sunday

September 4

1. A REALITY CHECK

- a. In order to come closer to God, what do we need to realize? Isaiah 59:1, 2.

“The sin which is indulged to the greatest extent, and which separates us from God and produces so many contagious spiritual disorders, is selfishness. There can be no returning to the Lord except by self-denial. Of ourselves we can do nothing; but, through God strengthening us, we can live to do good to others, and in this way shun the evil of selfishness. We need not go to heathen lands to manifest our desire to devote all to God in a useful, unselfish life. We should do this in the home circle, in the church, among those with whom we associate and with whom we do business. Right in the common walks of life is where self is to be denied and kept in subordination. Paul could say: ‘I die daily’ (1 Corinthians 15:31). It is the daily dying to self in the little transactions of life that makes us overcomers. We should forget self in the desire to do good to others. With many there is a decided lack of love for others. Instead of faithfully performing their duty, they seek rather their own pleasure.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 132.

“We must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that will result in contrition, before we can find pardon and peace.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158.

2. COMING CLOSER TO GOD

a. How important is humility in the eyes of God? Isaiah 57:14–17.

“If ever a people needed to walk in humility before God, it is His church, His chosen ones in this generation. We all need to bewail the dulness of our intellectual faculties, the lack of appreciation of our privileges and opportunities. We have nothing whereof to boast.”—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 63.

“All self-exaltation must be seen and put away. Truth and righteousness alone will stand the test for this time. We need to have the Spirit of God daily with us, that we may be kept from all evil thoughts and unwise actions, from lifting the soul unto vanity.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 65.

“The Lord is opening the way for the spread of the Gospel, but we are not ready. Daily we need to be softened and refined by the Holy Spirit’s power. Even our thoughts are to be brought into subjection to Christ. Unconsecrated self is to be crucified.”—*The Signs of the Times*, October 24, 1900.

b. What does God want to do for us through His word? Isaiah 57:18, 19.

“Center your faith so deeply and securely in Jesus Christ that no circumstance of any kind will jostle your faith. Let your life be hid with Christ in God.

“Do not waste your thoughts in dwelling upon the defective characters of others. This will not cure your defects of character. By dwelling upon the wrongs of others, you will be changed into the same image. Whenever you are tempted to talk of others’ follies, or blame them for injuries they have done to you, consider that they have wounded the heart of Christ in the person of His saints. Then take your Bible, and open it before God, and plead with Him for the healing balm of His peace.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, pp. 24, 25.

“The Word makes the proud humble, the perverse meek and contrite, the disobedient obedient. The sinful habits natural to man are interwoven with the daily practice. But the Word cuts away the fleshly lusts. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the mind. It divides the joints and marrow, cutting away the lusts of the flesh, making men willing to suffer for their Lord.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 928.

3. KEEPING ETERNITY IN VIEW

- a. In contrast to the comfort for the meek and contrite, what verdict comes to those who reject God's appeals? Isaiah 57:20, 21. How can we avoid this condition?

“Are you willing to cast down the idols you have cherished? Are you willing to let Jesus enter the heart to cleanse it from all that defiles? Are you at all times and under all circumstances obtaining the mastery over yourself? Can you say, ‘For me to live is Christ,’ I am His? Whatever I have, of time, or strength, or influence, all is His? Are you representing Him by your forbearance, your patience, your unselfishness?”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 9, 1902.

“O for that devotion and humility of heart that will lead God's people to do those things that Christ has commanded, and still in all humility and truth say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done only that which it was our duty to do! But many, many are swelling with pride and importance, who in God's estimation are lukewarm. Self-gratification is revealed because of a few things accomplished. Where do we hear the testimony of hearts that are broken in repentance and confession before God? Where do we see professed believers wearing the yoke of Christ? How little time is given to fervent prayer, the result of which would be the possession of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 16, 1909.

“It is not your profession, but your course of action, that will determine whether or not you are Christians. We are nearing the judgment, and we should strive to spend the little time that intervenes between the present and the coming of Christ, in an intelligent manner. We should seek to have the mind filled with valuable knowledge, not with wood, hay, and stubble. By wise cultivation our ability should increase, that we may have growing power to understand the sacred teachings of Christ. We are to become teachers of the mysteries of the gospel.”—*Ibid.*, April 19, 1892.

- b. What should we always keep in mind in view of eternity? Romans 14:10.

“We are living on the verge of the eternal world. The cases of all are being tried in the heavenly courts, and it is high time to put away sin and to work earnestly to save as many as possible.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 121.

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTION

- a. What does Christ identify as evidence that we are becoming imbued with a greater portion of His Holy Spirit—the promised Comforter? John 16:8.
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“The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. But do not be discouraged. This is evidence that Satan’s delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you, and your indifference and unconcern are passing away.

“No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not see and realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by grace will admire His divine character; but if we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ. The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our own sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon. Jesus will accept us; for His word is pledged.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 17, 1885.

- b. Explain the contrast between this humility and the opposite attitude frequently manifested in the world—and too often even in the church—and what are the consequences of the latter? James 3:13, 14.
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“What is lying against the truth? It is claiming to believe the truth while the spirit, the words, the deportment, represent not Christ but Satan. To surmise evil, to be impatient and unforgiving, is lying against the truth, but love, patience, and long forbearance are in accordance with the principles of truth.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 185.

“Many are cherishing an unholy desire for the supremacy. Many love to be flattered and are jealously watching for slights or neglect. There is a hard, unforgiving spirit. There is envy, strife, emulation. . . .

“Few receive the grace of Christ with self-abasement, with a deep and permanent sense of their unworthiness. They cannot bear the manifestations of the power of God, for this would encourage in them self-esteem, pride, and envy. This is why the Lord can do so little for us now.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 50, 51.

5. HUMBLE BEFORE OTHERS

- a. How do those who are Spirit-filled react to those who are faulty and erring? Galatians 6:1–3.

“ ‘Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us’ (Luke 11:4). We cannot repeat this prayer from the heart and dare be unforgiving; for we ask the Lord to forgive our trespasses against Him as we forgive those who trespass against us. Very few realize the true import of this prayer. If those who are unforgiving comprehended the depth of its meaning, they would not dare repeat it and ask God to deal with them as they deal with their fellow mortals.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, December 7, 1899.

“When the laborers have an abiding Christ in their own souls, when all selfishness is dead, when there is no rivalry, no strife for the supremacy, when oneness exists, when they sanctify themselves, so that love for one another is seen and felt, then the showers of the grace of the Holy Spirit will just as surely come upon them as that God’s promise will never fail in one jot or tittle. But when the work of others is discounted, that the workers may show their own superiority, they prove that their own work does not bear the signature it should. God cannot bless them.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 175.

“Before giving us the baptism of the Holy Spirit, our heavenly Father will try us, to see if we can live without dishonoring Him. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Do not think, my children, that you have received all the spiritual help you need. And do not think that you can have great spiritual blessings without complying with the conditions God Himself has laid down. James and John thought that for the asking, they could have the highest place in the kingdom of God. Oh, how far short they fell of understanding the situation! They did not realize that before they could share Christ’s glory, they must wear His yoke and daily learn His meekness and lowliness.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 178.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Through what key can the promises to the overcomers be granted to me?
2. What changes occur in us through wholehearted study of God’s word?
3. In view of the brief probationary time left, what should be our focus?
4. How may we be in danger of lying against the truth?
5. What practical steps can I take towards receiving the latter rain?

A Message for Today

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1).

“I cannot too strongly urge all our church members, all who are true missionaries, all who believe the third angel’s message, all who turn away their feet from the Sabbath, to consider the message of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 265.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 24–37; vol. 5, pp. 298–302.

Sunday

September 11

1. TO WHOM IS THIS MESSAGE ADDRESSED?

- a. What must we carefully keep in mind when seeking to promote the message of Isaiah, chapter 58? Isaiah 58:1.

“[Isaiah 58:1 quoted.] This message must be given; but while it must be given, we should be careful not to thrust and crowd and condemn those who have not the light that we have. We should not go out of our way to make hard thrusts at the Catholics. Among the Catholics there are many who are most conscientious Christians and who walk in all the light that shines upon them, and God will work in their behalf. Those who have had great privileges and opportunities, and who have failed to improve their physical, mental, and moral powers, but who have lived to please themselves and have refused to bear their responsibility, are in greater danger and in greater condemnation before God than those who are in error upon doctrinal points, yet who seek to live to do good to others. Do not censure others; do not condemn them.

“If we allow selfish considerations, false reasoning, and false excuses to bring us into a perverse state of mind and heart, so that we shall not know the ways and will of God, we shall be far more guilty than the open sinner. We need to be very cautious in order that we may not condemn those who, before God, are less guilty than ourselves.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 243, 244.

2. THE WARNING OFTEN SILENCED

- a. What is often the reaction faced by earnest believers seeking to “cry aloud, spare not” (Isaiah 58:1)? John 3:19–21; compare Numbers 16:1–4. What was the Lord’s messenger shown concerning the state of God’s professed people?
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“Many were cherishing idols in their hearts and were practicing iniquity which separated them from God and caused them to be bodies of darkness. I saw but few who stood in the light, having discernment and spirituality to discover these stumbling blocks and remove them out of the way. . . .

“Some who occupy the position of watchmen to warn the people of danger have given up their watch and recline at ease. They are unfaithful sentinels. They remain inactive, while their wily foe enters the fort and works successfully by their side to tear down what God has commanded to be built up. They see that Satan is deceiving the inexperienced and unsuspecting; yet they take it all quietly, as though they had no special interest, as though these things did not concern them. They apprehend no special danger; they see no cause to raise an alarm. To them everything seems to be going well, and they see no necessity of raising the faithful, trumpet notes of warning which they hear borne by the plain testimonies, to show the people their transgressions and the house of Israel their sins. These reproofs and warnings disturb the quiet of these sleepy, ease-loving sentinels, and they are not pleased. They say in heart, if not in words: ‘This is all uncalled for. It is too severe, too harsh. These men are unnecessarily disturbed and excited, and seem unwilling to give us any rest or quietude. ‘Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them’ (Numbers 16:3). They are not willing that we should have any comfort, peace, or happiness. It is active labor, toil, and unceasing vigilance alone which will satisfy these unreasonable, hard-to-be-suited watchmen. Why don’t they prophesy smooth things, and cry: Peace, peace? Then everything would move on smoothly.’ . . .

“The people have not erected graven images, yet their sin is no less in the sight of God. They worship mammon. They love worldly gain. Some will make any sacrifice of conscience to obtain their object. God’s professed people are selfish and self-caring. They love the things of this world, and have fellowship with the works of darkness. They have pleasure in unrighteousness. They have not love toward God nor love for their neighbors. They are idolaters and are worse, far worse, in the sight of God than the heathen, graven-image worshipers who have no knowledge of a better way.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 439–441.

3. THE TRUMPET MUTED

- a. What factors make the task difficult for all who would seek to give the warning trumpet a distinctive sound? Isaiah 58:2; Ezekiel 2:1-7.
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“It is not the wicked world, but those whom the Lord designates as ‘my people,’ that are to be reprov’d for their transgressions. He declares further: ‘Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God’ (Isaiah 58:1, 2). Here is brought to view a class who think themselves righteous and appear to manifest great interest in the service of God; but the stern and solemn rebuke of the Searcher of hearts proves them to be trampling upon the divine precepts.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 452.

“The Lord says of these people: ‘They seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness.’ Here is a people who are self-deceived, self-righteous, self-complacent; and the minister is commanded to cry aloud and show them their transgressions. In all ages this work has been done for God’s people, and it is needed now more than ever before. . . .

“God always has men to whom He entrusts His message. His Spirit moves upon their hearts and constrains them to speak. Stimulated by holy zeal, and with the divine impulse strong upon them, they enter upon the performance of their duty without coldly calculating the consequences of speaking to the people the word which the Lord has given them. But the servant of God is soon made aware that he has risked something. He finds himself and his message made the subject of criticism. His manners, his life, his property, are all inspected and commented upon. His message is picked to pieces and rejected in the most illiberal and unsanctified spirit, as men in their finite judgment see fit. Has that message done the work that God designed it should accomplish? No; it has signally failed because the hearts of the hearers were unsanctified.

“If the minister’s face is not flint, if he has not indomitable faith and courage, if his heart is not made strong by constant communion with God, he will begin to shape his testimony to please the unsanctified ears and hearts of those he is addressing. In endeavoring to avoid the criticism to which he is exposed, he separates from God and loses the sense of divine favor, and his testimony becomes tame and lifeless. He finds that his courage and faith are gone and his labors powerless.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 299.

4. FOR WHOM AM I REALLY MOURNING?

- a. How are God's professed people in Isaiah 58 expecting Him to respond to their service toward Him—and what does He answer? Isaiah 58:3; Malachi 3:14, 15. What factors should we consider today about our own attitude in this regard—both toward God and toward others?

“[Isaiah 58:1–3 quoted.] The prophet presents before us a people who are finding fault with the Lord because He does not give them all that they selfishly desire. The Lord in His answer to their complaints shows that they do not deserve all that they require at His hands; for they have not dealt righteously.”—*The General Conference Bulletin*, May 31, 1909.

“The fasts observed by these worshipers [in Isaiah 58] are a mere pretense, a mockery of humility. They retain all their objectionable traits of character. Their hearts are not cleansed from defilement. They have not received the softening showers of the grace of God. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit, destitute of the sweetness of its influence. They manifest no repentance, no faith that works by love. They are unjust and selfish in their dealing with their fellowmen, mercilessly oppressing those whom they regard as their inferiors. Yet they complain because God does not exalt them above all others because of their righteousness.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 25, 1901.

“The people whom the prophet [Isaiah] is commanded to warn . . . have a form of godliness, and regard themselves as entitled to special favor and blessing, because they make a high profession and keep up a round of religious service. This nourishes their self-complacency, and they feel as the young man felt who came to Christ, claiming to have kept all the commandments, and asked, ‘What lack I yet?’ . . . This young man flattered himself that he was keeping all the commandments of God; but was he?—No. He did not love God supremely; for he loved his wealth, which was given him only in trust, more than he loved God; and he did not love his neighbors as himself; for he was not willing to distribute his riches among them. He loved his property more than he loved the souls for whom Christ was ready to sacrifice his own life.”—*Ibid.*, October 13, 1891.

“We need to beware of self-pity. Never indulge the feeling that you are not esteemed as you should be, that your efforts are not appreciated, that your work is too difficult. Let the memory of what Christ has endured for us silence every murmuring thought. We are treated better than was our Lord.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 476.

5. THE MOTIVE BEHIND THE ACTION

- a. In Isaiah 58, what was the real motive behind the fasting of God's people? Isaiah 58:4. How must we avoid the spirit of this practice? Luke 7:33–35.

“The world’s Redeemer cannot honor the fasts observed by the Jewish nation. They fast in pride and self-righteousness, while Christ eats in humility with publicans and sinners.

“Since the fall, the work of Satan has been to accuse, and those who refuse the light which God sends, pursue the same course today. They lay open to others those things which they consider an offense. Thus it was with the Pharisees. When they found something of which they could accuse the disciples, they did not speak to those whom they thought to be in error. They spoke to Christ of the things which they thought to be so grievous in His disciples. When they thought that Christ offended, they accused Him to the disciples. It was their work to alienate hearts.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1088.

“When our prayers are offered in self-confidence, when we fail to watch, and bring our actions into harmony with our prayers, we are not accounted worshipers in the sight of heaven. We are destitute of the faith that works by love and purifies the soul; for genuine faith will lead the possessor to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and crucify selfishness, self-love, impatience, and self-righteousness. Those who would truly follow Christ must daily learn lessons in meekness and lowliness of heart, that they may speak guardedly, manifest courtesy and kindness, have tender hearts, and bring sympathy and sunshine into the home. All strife, all debate, all smiting with the tongue and the fist of wickedness, must be put away. The overbearing will must be subdued, and gentleness and a disposition to be easily entreated must be cultivated.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 5, 1894.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What Bible principle determines our level of accountability toward God?
2. Why does a straight testimony reproving sin meet with opposition?
3. If we are serious about eternity, how will we feel about principles?
4. What was wrong with the fasting of the Jews in Isaiah 58?
5. Whether with fasting or not, what kind of attitudes hinder prayer?

A Mission for Today

“They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in” (Isaiah 58:12).

“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. . . . They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678.

Suggested Reading: *Welfare Ministry*, pp. 29–41.

Sunday

September 18

1. SIGNS OF AN ARTIFICIAL RELIGION

a. How can we avoid false humility? Isaiah 58:5; Philippians 2:3, 14, 15.

“Let no one think that to bow the head as a bulrush will take the place of true humility. Such humility is a sham; for where meekness does not exist in the heart it will not be manifested in the life. Those who are merely professors of truth and not doers of the word, will break down the family altar and stir up strife and contention in the home, and there will be dearth of holy and beneficent actions that flow from faith in Christ. The most convincing evidence of the power of the gospel to the world is its effect on the lives of those who believe it. He who is a true Christian will represent Christ and will cease from all murmuring or complaining of God, or of his fellow men. . . .

“Those who are merely surface Christians are no blessing to themselves or others, although they fast and spread sackcloth and ashes under them. The old habits return; quick temper, suspicion, jealousy, judgment of others—all manifest that they are not controlled by the grace of Christ. . . . When they fail to manifest a Christlike action, they throw the blame and responsibility upon the circumstances which surround them or the people with whom they are brought in contact. Instead of examining themselves to see wherein their inconsistency lies, they bemoan their case, and think that their difficulties are the results of other’s misdeeds.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 5, 1894.

2. GOD'S CHOSEN FAST

a. What kind of fast reveals the highest level of Christian piety? Isaiah 58:6.

“The work of beneficence enjoined in this chapter [Isaiah 58] is the work that God requires His people to do at this time.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 265.

“When we present the perfection that there is in [God’s] requirements, in His commandments, in His law, we are presenting that which will loose the bands of wickedness, and in the place of making men fast, in the place of shackling them with sin, it will loose the bands of wickedness, and those that are oppressed by the enemy.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 38.

“Find out what the poor and suffering are in need of, and then, in love and tenderness, help them to courage and hope and confidence by sharing with them the good things that God has given you. Thus you will be doing the very work that God means you to do. ‘Let the oppressed go free’ (Isaiah 58:6). Do not rest until you break every yoke. It is not possible for you to neglect this and yet obey God.”—*Pacific Union Recorder*, July 21, 1904.

b. What else does God’s true fast involve? Isaiah 58:7.

“[Isaiah 58:6, 7 quoted.] This is the recipe that Christ has prescribed for the fainthearted, doubting, trembling soul. Let the sorrowful ones, who walk mournfully before the Lord, arise and help someone who needs help. . . .

“The Lord calls upon the church to have a higher piety, a more just sense of duty, a clearer realization of their obligations to their Creator. He calls upon them to be a pure, sanctified, working people. And the Christian help work is one means of bringing this about, for the Holy Spirit communicates with all who are doing God’s service.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 266, 267.

“Remember that there is a world to save. We are to act our part, standing close by the side of Christ as His collaborators. He is the head; we are His helping hand. He designs that we, by doing medical missionary work, shall undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free. Let us not close our eyes to the misery around us or our ears to the cries of distress which are continually ascending. Christ is the greatest missionary the world has ever known. He came to uplift and cheer the sorrowing and distressed, and in this work we are to cooperate with Him.”—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 118.

3. OVERHAULING OUR SPEECH HABITS

- a. **What abundant promise comes to all who, by faith, pursue the joy of practical service to others in need? Isaiah 58:8.**
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“[Isaiah 58:8 quoted.] As the members of our churches individually take up their appointed work, they will be surrounded with an entirely different atmosphere. A blessing and a power will attend their labors. They will experience a higher culture of mind and heart. The selfishness that has bound up their souls will be overcome. Their faith will be a living principle.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 267, 268.

- b. **Why must we completely overcome the unchristian habit of “the putting forth of the finger”? Isaiah 58:9, 10; Matthew 7:1–5.**
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“The very ones who are blind to their own faults are often quick to note the faults of others, quick to criticize their words, and condemn them for something they have or have not done. . . .

“Every unkind criticism of others, every word of self-esteem, is ‘the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity’ (Isaiah 58:9). The lifting up of self in pride, as if you were faultless, the magnifying of the faults of others, is an offense to God. . . .

“We have no right to withdraw our confidence from a brother because some evil report comes to our ears, some accusation is made or supposition is suggested that he has done wrong. Frequently the evil report that is brought to us is made by those who are at enmity with God, those who are joining the enemy in his work of accusing the brethren. Those who are unmindful of the Saviour’s words, ‘Take heed therefore how ye hear,’ (Luke 8:18) allow their unsanctified ears to hear wrong, their perverted senses to imagine wrong, and their evil tongues to report wrong.

“Many who are accusers of the brethren will not come out openly and talk with those who they think are in error, but will go to others, and, under the mask of friendship for the erring, will cast reflections upon them. Sometimes these accusers will openly agree with those whom they covertly seek to injure. They will state as facts, accusations which are only suppositions, and fail to give those whom they accuse a definite statement of what they suppose to be their errors, so that they give them no chance to answer the charges against them.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 7, 1895.

4. BUILDING INSTEAD OF DESTROYING

- a. What change will come into our experience as we gain the victory over “the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity”? Isaiah 58:10, 11.

“Those who might do good service in advancing the cause of Christ, but who use their talents and influence to tear down instead of to build up, will feel the wrath of God. They will experience what Christ suffered in saving men from the penalty of the broken law. The value of man and the measure of his accountability can be known only by the cross of Calvary.”—*The Southern Watchman*, March 31, 1908.

“Doing good is an excellent remedy for disease. Those who engage in the work are invited to call upon God, and He has pledged Himself to answer them. Their soul shall be satisfied in drought, and they shall be like a watered garden, whose waters fail not.

“Wake up, brethren and sisters. Do not be afraid of good works. ‘Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not’ (Galatians 6:9). Do not wait to be told your duty. Open your eyes and see who are around you; make yourselves acquainted with the helpless, afflicted, and needy. Hide not yourselves from them, and seek not to shut out their needs. Who gives the proofs mentioned in James, of possessing pure religion, untainted with selfishness or corruption? Who are anxious to do all in their power to aid in the great plan of salvation?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 29.

- b. Describe our assigned mission and the promise accompanying it. Isaiah 58:12, 13 (first part).

“God’s people have a special work to do in repairing the breach that has been made in His law; and the nearer we approach the end, the more urgent this work becomes. All who love God will show that they bear His sign by keeping His commandments. They are the restorers of paths to dwell in. . . . [Isaiah 58:13, 14 quoted.] Thus genuine medical missionary work is bound up inseparably with the keeping of God’s commandments, of which the Sabbath is especially mentioned, since it is the great memorial of God’s creative work. Its observance is bound up with the work of restoring the moral image of God in man. This is the ministry which God’s people are to carry forward at this time.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 265, 266.

5. PEACE THROUGH THE PRINCE OF PEACE

- a. What should we understand about genuine Christian helpfulness as part of true Sabbathkeeping? Isaiah 58:13, 14.
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“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. But, on the other hand, the angels were turning from those who failed to appreciate the sacredness of God’s sanctified day, and were removing from them their light and their strength. I saw them overshadowed with a cloud, desponding, and frequently sad. They felt a lack of the Spirit of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 704, 705.

“Those who have lived, not to please themselves, but to be a blessing to the unfortunate who have so few blessings—how their hearts will thrill with satisfaction! They will realize the promise: ‘Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just’ (Luke 14:14).”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 312.

“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 Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 289.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Give some examples of false humility—and of true humility.
2. What hypocritical type of fast does God condemn?
3. How can I partake of the best type of fasting that God wants for me?
4. What human tendency of tearing down can be turned into building up?
5. Summarize God’s glorious plan for Sabbathkeepers today.

First Sabbath Offerings



JULY 2
for a chapel on Maré,
New Caledonia
(See p. 4.)

AUGUST 6
for Missionary Schools and
Education Projects
(See p. 30.)



SEPTEMBER 6
for a sanitarium
in Baños, Ecuador
(See p. 51.)