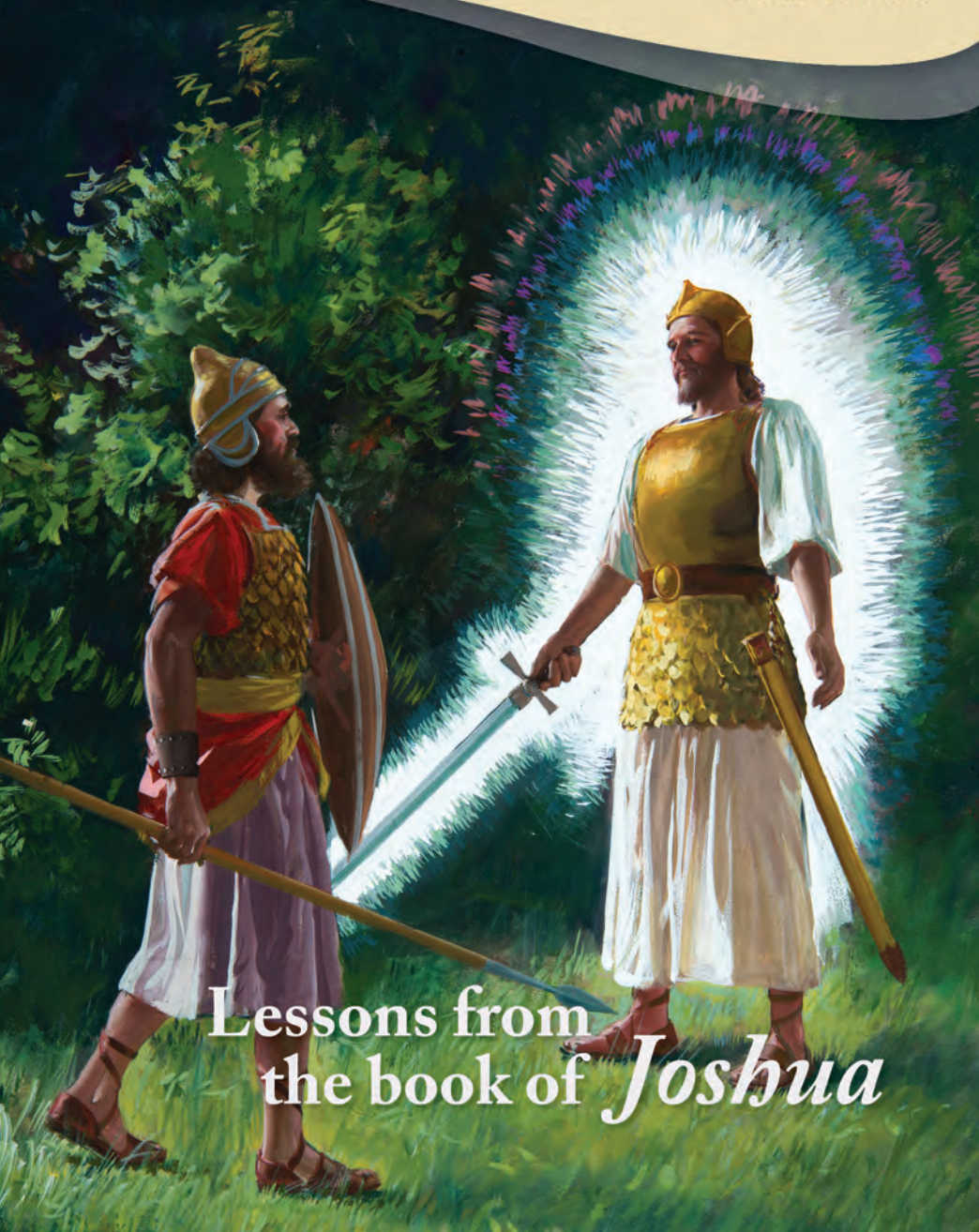


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division



Lessons from the book of *Joshua*

Vol. 95, No. 1

January–March, 2019

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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

How close are we to the brink of eternity? This information has not been entrusted to mortal flesh, yet most of us would agree that the final events of this world's history are fast approaching—that the second coming of Jesus in power and glory is even at the door. For this reason, Sabbath school students around the world will be considering *Lessons From the Book of Joshua*. As God's faithful servant was entrusted with leading a people into earthly Canaan, so we are about to enter the heavenly Canaan.

"The history of the children of Israel is written for our admonition and instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. Those who would stand firm in the faith in these last days, and finally gain an entrance into the heavenly Canaan, must listen to the words of warning spoken by Jesus Christ to the Israelites. These lessons were given to the church in the wilderness to be studied and heeded by God's people throughout their generations forever. The experience of the people of God in the wilderness will be the experience of His people in this age."—*The Upward Look*, p. 232.

"Through His people Israel, God designed to give to the world a knowledge of His will. His promises and threatenings, His instructions and reproofs, the wonderful manifestations of His power among them, in blessings for obedience, and judgment for transgression and apostasy,—all were designed for the education and development of religious principle among the people of God until the close of time. Therefore, it is important that we acquaint ourselves with the history of the Hebrew host, and ponder with care the dealings of God with them."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 994.

"Religion in the days of Moses and Joshua was the same as religion today."—*Ibid.*

"God's laws and kingdom were to extend over all the territory of the earth, and His people must be known as the people of the living God. . . .

"His people would never know defeat if they would abide under the shadow of the Almighty; for One mightier than angels would fight by their side in every battle."—*Ibid.*, p. 999.

"There must be continual faith and trust in the Captain of our salvation. We must obey His orders. The walls of Jericho came down as a result of obeying orders."—*The Review and Herald*, July 12, 1887.

May the Lord help us to take these lessons to heart as we diligently prepare for entrance into the heavenly Canaan, graciously led through the sacrifice and strength of the mighty Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for the Zimbabwe West Field's Headquarters

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa, known for its dramatic landscape, huge mineral deposits and diverse wildlife. On the mighty Zambezi River, Victoria Falls is one of the seven wonders of the natural world, make a thundering 108-meter drop into the narrow Batoka Gorge.



Zimbabwe is bordered by South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique. This nation, with a population of about 16 million, enjoys complete freedom of worship. Most Zimbabwean Christians are Protestants. The Protestant Christian churches with a large membership are the Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist and Methodist churches. There are about a million Roman Catholics.

In 2008, with inflation skyrocketing to an astronomical 231 million percent, the nation's currency totally collapsed and became worthless. To stabilize the economy, the government adopted the use of the United States dollar as its main currency.

The message of Reformation reached Zimbabwe in 1928. T.T. Ndlovu, a teacher at the Solusi Mission, saw a letter with SDA Reform Movement letterhead in the office of his pastor. Since he had not known about the existence of such an organization, he copied the address and started corresponding with brethren from Europe. Soon he was preaching the Reform message and was banished from the mission to his home area where he eventually pioneered the first Reform Movement church in Africa. In 1951, the enemy attacked the Reform Movement and caused a chasm within the church, yet faithful members regrouped—and since that time, the work has been steadily developing, leading to the establishment of a Field and a Mission. Recently, brethren in Zimbabwe started projects, and through self-sacrifice, have constructed memorials to God in the form of church buildings. Now it has become necessary to build the headquarters with a church office, preschool, and a health center.

We appeal to all our brethren, sisters and friends around the world for prayers and donations to accomplish this major development befitting this pioneer country on the African continent.

Your brethren from the Zimbabwe West Field

Courageous Leadership

“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord” (Psalm 31:24).

“You may reach God’s ideal if you will resolve that self shall not be woven into your work. To know that you are striving in spirit and in works to be Christlike, will give you strength and comfort and courage.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 164.

Suggested Reading: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 497–502.

Sunday

December 30

1. THE VALUE OF A FAITHFUL LEADER

- a. What should we learn from the way Israel responded to the death of Moses? Deuteronomy 34:7, 8; Psalm 112:6.

“The Israelites deeply mourned for their departed leader, and thirty days were devoted to special services in honor of his memory. Never till he was taken from them had they so fully realized the value of his wise counsels, his parental tenderness, and his unswerving faith. With a new and deeper appreciation they recalled the precious lessons he had given while still with them.

“Moses was dead, but his influence did not die with him. It was to live on, reproducing itself in the hearts of his people. The memory of that holy, unselfish life would long be cherished, with silent, persuasive power molding the lives even of those who had neglected his living words.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 481.

- b. What should the loss of burden bearers make us consider? Psalm 116:15.

“Those who have borne the burden and heat of the day, should not be left to be crushed under the load.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 15, 1885.

2. CULTIVATING APPRECIATION

- a. **Why must we make it a point to appreciate God-fearing leaders? Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17.**
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“The names of God’s chosen servants have been handled with disrespect, and in some cases with absolute contempt, by certain persons whose duty it is to uphold them. The children have not failed to hear the disrespectful remarks of their parents in reference to the solemn reproofs and warnings of God’s servants. They have understood the scornful jests and depreciatory speeches that from time to time have met their ears, and the tendency has been to bring sacred and eternal interests, in their minds, on a level with the common affairs of the world. What a work are these parents doing in making infidels of their children even in their childhood! This is the way that children are taught to be irreverent and to rebel against Heaven’s reproof of sin. . . .

“There are many who find special enjoyment in discoursing and dwelling upon the defects, whether real or imaginary, of those who bear heavy responsibilities in connection with the institutions of God’s cause. They overlook the good that has been accomplished, the benefits that have resulted from arduous labor and unflinching devotion to the cause, and fasten their attention upon some apparent mistake, some matter that, after it has been done and the consequences have followed, they fancy could have been done in a better manner with fairer results, when the truth is, had they been left to do the work, they would either have refused to move at all under the attending discouragements of the case, or would have managed more indiscreetly than those who did do the work, following the opening of God’s providence.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 195, 196.

- b. **How can we show our appreciation for our leaders today? Hebrews 12:12, 13; Job 4:4.**
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“The words of criticism that have been spoken have at times had a very discouraging effect. But again and again in their necessity, the Lord sent them the word to go straight ahead, to follow their Leader. I have been instructed to lift up the hands that hang down and to strengthen the feeble knees, to encourage the faithful laborers with words from the Lord.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 409.

3. THE SUCCESSOR OF MOSES

- a. Who was appointed to be the visible leader of Israel after Moses' death? What were his qualifications? Deuteronomy 34:9.
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“Joshua was now the acknowledged leader of Israel. He had been known chiefly as a warrior, and his gifts and virtues were especially valuable at this stage in the history of his people. Courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care for those committed to his charge, and, above all, inspired by a living faith in God—such was the character of the man divinely chosen to conduct the armies of Israel in their entrance upon the Promised Land. During the sojourn in the wilderness he had acted as prime minister to Moses, and by his quiet, unpretending fidelity, his steadfastness when others wavered, his firmness to maintain the truth in the midst of danger, he had given evidence of his fitness to succeed Moses, even before he was called to the position by the voice of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 481, 482.

- b. What attitude was the first secret of Joshua's success? Isaiah 57:15; 66:2.
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“It was with great anxiety and self-distrust that Joshua had looked forward to the work before him.”—*Ibid.*, p. 482.

- c. Explain the plan God presented. What was the only way Joshua would be able to fulfill it? Joshua 1:1–5, 9.
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“Joshua was a wise general because God was his guide.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 116.

“The Lord promised Joshua that He would be with him as He had been with Moses, and He would make Canaan an easy conquest to him, provided he would be faithful to observe all His commandments. Joshua had been anxious concerning the execution of his commission to lead the people into the land of Canaan; but this assurance removed his fears.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 156, 157.

4. COURAGE THROUGH CONSECRATION

- a. What did God repeatedly tell this new leader? Why? Joshua 1:6, 7.
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“Do you think that all these charges would have been given to Joshua if there had been no danger of his being brought under misleading influences? It was because the strongest influences were to be brought to bear against his principles of righteousness that the Lord in mercy charged him not to turn to the right hand or to the left. He was to follow a course of strictest integrity. . . . If there had been no peril before Joshua, God would not over and over again have charged him to be of good courage. But amid all his cares, Joshua had his God to guide him.

“There is no greater deception than for man to suppose that in any difficulty he can find a better guide than God, a wiser counselor in any emergency, a stronger defense under any circumstance.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 993.

- b. How was Joshua to be equipped in order to fulfill God’s plans? Joshua 1:8. What can we learn from this?
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“While Bible religion embodies the principles of activity in service, at the same time there is the necessity of asking for wisdom daily from the Source of all wisdom. What was Joshua’s victory? Thou shalt meditate upon the Word of God day and night. . . .

“Those holding the positions of counselors should be unselfish men, men of faith, men of prayer, men that will not dare to rely upon their own human wisdom, but will seek earnestly for light and intelligence as to what is the best manner of conducting their business. Joshua, the commander of Israel, searched the books diligently in which Moses had faithfully chronicled the directions given by God,—His requirements, reproofs, and restrictions,—lest he should move unadvisedly. Joshua was afraid to trust his own impulses, or his own wisdom. He regarded everything that came from Christ, who was enshrouded by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, as of sufficient importance to be sacredly cherished.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 993, 994.

5. COURAGE FOR A WORTHY CAUSE

- a. What assurance do we have as we seek to be of good courage in doing our part in the Lord's vineyard? Psalm 31:24; Isaiah 41:10.

"As the standard-bearers are fainting and falling, who are coming up to take their place? . . . Are there not men who will dedicate themselves to God, soul, body, and spirit, to go forth and enlighten others? . . .

"The torch of truth must be carried into the dark places of the earth. While the angels are holding the winds, we must work as Christ worked. . . .

"If we had toiled with fidelity, patience, and love, we should have had one hundred workers where there is one. Unimproved opportunities are written against us in the same book that bears the record of envy and rebellion against God."—*The Review and Herald*, December 15, 1885.

"This world is God's great field of labor; He has purchased those that dwell on it with the blood of His only-begotten Son, and He means that His message of mercy shall go to everyone. Those who are commissioned to do this work will be tested and tried, but they are always to remember that God is near to strengthen and uphold them. He does not ask us to depend upon any broken reed. We are not to look for human aid. God forbid that we should place man where God should be. . . . The Lord Jehovah is 'everlasting strength.'"—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 352.

"Be of good courage in the Lord. Remember how merciful and kind He is, how great has been His keeping power over you. That which men have failed to do, God has done. Honor Him. Be an example of piety to all with whom you are connected. Let God do all judging. Your work is to love and serve God and to be a help to others."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 151.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What should the Israelites have considered while Moses was still alive?
2. How may I be at risk of undermining the effectiveness of faithful leaders?
3. Explain the secrets of Joshua's success from the very beginning of his work.
4. How was Joshua able to develop courage?
5. What should motivate us to cultivate the quality of courage?

Cooperating for Success

“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace” (Hebrews 11:31).

“In wicked Jericho the testimony of a heathen woman was, ‘The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.’ Joshua 2:11. The knowledge of Jehovah that had thus come to her, proved her salvation.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 369.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 369, 370, 375–378.

Sunday

January 6

1. GUIDELINES FOR EFFICIENCY

- a. What shows that Joshua planned efficiently, as a man of action? Joshua 1:10–15. How should this inspire us today?

“Well-defined plans should be freely presented to all whom they may concern, and it should be ascertained that they are understood. Then require of all those who are at the head of the various departments to cooperate in the execution of these plans. If this sure and radical method is properly adopted and followed up with interest and good will, it will avoid much work being done without any definite object, much useless friction.”—*Evangelism*, p. 94.

“Let companies now be quickly organized to go out two and two, and labor in the Spirit of Christ, following His plans. Even though some Judas may introduce himself into the ranks of the workers, the Lord will care for the work. His angels will go before and prepare the way. Before this time, every large city should have heard the testing message, and thousands should have been brought to a knowledge of the truth. Wake up the churches, take the light from under the bushel.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 303.

2. WINNING CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT

- a. **How did the tribes on the east side of the Jordan assure Joshua of their confidence and support? Joshua 1:16, 17. What can we learn from this?**
-

“Christ would have His followers brought together in church capacity, observing order, having rules and discipline, and all subject one to another, esteeming others better than themselves. Union and confidence are essential to the prosperity of the church. If each member of the church feels at liberty to move independently of the others, taking his own peculiar course, how can the church be in any safety in the hour of danger and peril? The prosperity and very existence of a church depend upon the prompt, united action and mutual confidence of its members. When, at a critical time, one sounds the alarm of danger, there is need of prompt and active work, without stopping to question and canvass the whole subject from end to end, thus letting the enemy gain every advantage by delay, when united action might save many souls from perdition. . . .

“Confidence in our brethren is essential to the prosperity of the church; union of action is important in a religious crisis. One imprudent step, one careless action, may plunge the church into difficulties and trials from which it may not recover for years. One member of the church filled with unbelief may give an advantage to the great foe that will affect the prosperity of the entire church, and many souls may be lost as the result.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 445, 446.

- b. **How did the people encourage Joshua? Joshua 1:18. How can we be inspired by this support of leadership?**
-

“Let us not discourage one another. Let us take hold unitedly to make every line of the Lord’s work a success. If someone comes to you and talks discouragingly about the work in one or another of our institutions, telling you that they are extravagant beyond measure, say to them, ‘I am sorry if that is so, but let us help them out if they are in difficulty.’ If you will speak thus you may avoid much of the evil that might result were you to withdraw your sympathy, and should you refuse to help those who, possibly, may have been misrepresented. Let us never discourage even those who have done wrong, by treating them as if they had committed against us an unpardonable sin.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 243.

3. ASSESSING THE CHALLENGE

- a. What step did Joshua take when facing the first obstacle in the journey? Joshua 2:1 (first part).
-

“The Israelites were still encamped on the east side of Jordan, which presented the first barrier to the occupation of Canaan. ‘Arise,’ had been the first message of God to Joshua, ‘go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them.’ No instruction was given as to the way in which they were to make the passage. Joshua knew, however, that whatever God should command, He would make a way for His people to perform, and in this faith the intrepid leader at once began his arrangements for an advance.

“A few miles beyond the river, just opposite the place where the Israelites were encamped, was the large and strongly fortified city of Jericho. This city was virtually the key to the whole country, and it would present a formidable obstacle to the success of Israel. Joshua therefore sent two young men as spies to visit this city and ascertain something as to its population, its resources, and the strength of its fortifications.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 482.

- b. Explain the state of mind of Jericho’s inhabitants and the protection given by Rahab at the peril of her life. Joshua 2:1 (second part)–9.
-

“The terrible judgments of God which were visited upon the idolaters in the lands through which the children of Israel passed caused a fear and dread to fall upon all people living on the earth.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 994.

- c. What did Rahab recognize as the key to Israel’s strength? Joshua 2:10, 11.
-

“Through the teaching of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, . . . turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God were to unite themselves with His chosen people.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 19.

4. A HEATHEN SOUL CONVERTED

- a. **By what process did Rahab protect the men of God and in turn receive protection herself as well? Joshua 2:12–20. What does this teach us?**
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“Those who are watching for souls, who devote themselves most fully to the salvation of the erring, are most surely working out their own salvation.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 607.

- b. **What did the woman do to signify her agreement? Joshua 2:21. How important is cooperation in the work of God?**
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“There is much said concerning the inefficiency of human effort, and yet the Lord does nothing for the salvation of the soul without the cooperation of man.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 217.

- c. **What should we learn from the caution exercised by the spies? Joshua 2:22.**
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“There are those who have a reckless spirit, which they term courage and bravery. They needlessly place themselves in scenes of danger and peril, thus exposing themselves to temptations out of which it would require a miracle of God to bring them unharmed and untainted. . . .

“God’s precious promises are not given to strengthen man in a presumptuous course or for him to rely upon when he rushes needlessly into danger. The Lord requires us to move with a humble dependence upon His providence. ‘It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.’ In God is our prosperity and our life. Nothing can be done prosperously without the permission and blessing of God. He can set His hand to prosper and bless, or He can turn His hand against us. . . . We should exercise prudence, caution, and humility, and walk circumspectly toward them that are without.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 482.

5. HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

- a. When the spies returned to the camp of Israel, what did they report to Joshua? Joshua 2:23, 24. How important is it to use encouraging words?

“The bright and cheerful side of religion will be represented by all who are daily consecrated to God. We should not dishonor our Lord by a mournful relation of trials that appear grievous. All trials that are received as educators will produce joy. The whole religious life will be uplifting, elevating, ennobling, fragrant with good words and works: The enemy is well pleased to have souls depressed, downcast; he desires unbelievers to gain wrong impressions regarding the effect of our faith. But God desires the mind to take a higher level. He desires every soul to triumph in the keeping power of the Redeemer.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1183.

- b. When Jericho was later destroyed, how did the Israelites treat Rahab and her family? Joshua 6:21–23, 25. What shows the victory possible through faith, regardless of whatever sin we may have indulged? Hebrews 11:31.

“The stronghold of sin is in the will. Put your will on God’s side of the question; place yourself no longer in the position of a sinner, a harlot. You may not see clearly how you will obtain deliverance from the sins which have been cherished, and strengthened with repetition. The only way is to confess your sins, forsake them, and believe that Jesus will pardon you.”—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, pp. 140, 141.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In my missionary efforts, how can I imitate the efficiency of Joshua?
2. How can I imitate the support that the tribes gave to Joshua at the Jordan?
3. What is God’s plan for the “Rahabs” we may encounter on a daily basis?
4. Why are caution and prudence important virtues in perilous times?
5. How can my speech become more like the report the spies brought back?

Clinging to God's Presence

“And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it” (Joshua 3:3).

“Study carefully the experiences of Israel in their travels to Canaan. Study the third and fourth chapters of Joshua, recording their preparation for and passage over the Jordan into the promised land.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 994.

Suggested Readings: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 483–486;
Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 645–653;
Early Writings, p. 32.

Sunday

January 13

1. EYES FOCUSING IN FAITH

- a. What distinct command did Joshua give regarding the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God's presence in Israel? Why? Joshua 3:2–4.

“The ark of God was a sacred chest, made to be the depository of the ten commandments, which law was the representative of God himself. This ark was considered the glory and strength of Israel. The token of Divine presence abode upon it day and night.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 101.

- b. In what sense is the ark of the covenant in Heaven equally significant for us today, in a figurative sense? Hebrews 8:1, 2; 9:3–5.
-

“Satan has laid every measure possible that nothing shall come among us as a people to reprove and rebuke us, and exhort us to put away our errors. But there is a people who will bear the ark of God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 411.

2. PREPARING TO SEE AMAZING THINGS

- a. **Before the Israelites could experience God's presence in a miraculous way, how did Joshua tell them to prepare themselves? Joshua 3:5.**
-
- b. **How does God sanctify or purify us today, and what does sanctification involve on our part? Titus 2:14; Matthew 16:24.**
-

"True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love. . . .

"Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 560.

"Genuine sanctification . . . is nothing less than a daily dying to self and daily conformity to the will of God. . . . Paul's sanctification was a constant conflict with self. Said he: 'I die daily.' His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did the will of God, however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 299.

"True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character."—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 350.

"Here is Bible sanctification. It is not merely a show or outside work. It is sanctification received through the channel of truth. It is truth received in the heart, and practically carried out in the life."—*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 339.

- c. **Who were commanded to be the first to potentially risk life and safety for the sake of the people? Joshua 3:6–8.**
-

"The priests obeyed the commands of their leader, and went before the people carrying the ark of the covenant. Orders had been given for the multitude to fall back, so that there was a vacant space of three-fourths of a mile about the ark. The immense hosts watched with deep interest as the priests advanced down the bank of the Jordan. They saw them with the sacred ark move steadily forward, toward the angry, surging stream, till the feet of the bearers seemed to be dipping into the waters."—*The Signs of the Times*, April 7, 1881.

3. THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

- a. What promise was fulfilled to the consecrated men of God who bore the sacred ark in the face of danger? Isaiah 43:2.
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“Four heavenly angels always accompanied the ark of God in all its journeyings, to guard it from all danger, and to fulfill any mission required of them in connection with the ark.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 102.

- b. What did the Lord promise with regard to the bearing of the ark at the tremendous swelling of the river Jordan? Joshua 3:9–13.
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- c. What hope does God extend to every burden bearer who faithfully presses forward to “bear the ark” today, spreading the present truth often under difficult and trying circumstances? Psalm 126:4–6.
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“There are times when it seems to the servant of God impossible to do the work necessary to be done, because of the lack of means to carry on a strong, solid work. Some are fearful that with the facilities at their command they cannot do all that they feel it their duty to do. But if they advance in faith, the salvation of God will be revealed, and prosperity will attend their efforts. He who has bidden His followers go into all parts of the world will sustain every laborer who in obedience to His command seeks to proclaim His message.

“In the upbuilding of His work the Lord does not always make everything plain before His servants. He sometimes tries the confidence of His people by bringing about circumstances which compel them to move forward in faith. Often He brings them into strait and trying places, and bids them advance when their feet seem to be touching the waters of Jordan. It is at such times, when the prayers of His servants ascend to Him in earnest faith, that God opens the way before them and brings them out into a large place.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 357.

4. THE HAND OF GOD AT WORK

- a. What amazing result followed when the priests implicitly obeyed the command that God gave through Joshua? Joshua 3:14–17; 4:18.
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“The priests obeyed the commands of their leader and went before the people, carrying the ark of the covenant. The Hebrew hosts took up the line of march and followed this symbol of the divine presence. The wide column filed down the bank of Jordan, and, as the feet of the priests were dipped in the brim of the river, the water was cut off from above, and the volume below rolled on, leaving the bed of the stream dry. The priests passed on, bearing the ark of God, and Israel followed in the rear. Halfway over Jordan the priests were commanded to stand still in the channel of the river till all the Hebrew host had crossed over. This was to impress upon their minds more forcibly the fact that the power which stayed the waters of Jordan was the same that enabled their fathers to cross the Red Sea forty years before.

“Many who passed through the Red Sea when they were children, now, by a similar miracle, crossed over Jordan, men of war, equipped for battle. After the host of Israel had all passed over, Joshua commanded the priests to come up out of the river. When they, bearing the ark of the covenant, stood safe upon the farther shore, God removed His mighty hand, and the accumulated waters rushed down, a mighty cataract, in the natural channel of the stream. Jordan rolled on, a resistless flood, overflowing all its banks.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 157, 158.

- b. How and why was this miracle to be kept in memory? How did this affect the surrounding nations? Joshua 4:4–9, 21–24; 5:1.
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“Jesus the Son of God, followed by heavenly angels, went before the ark as it came to Jordan, and the waters were cut off before His presence. Christ and angels stood by the ark and the priests in the bed of the river until all Israel had passed over Jordan.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 102.

“When the tidings that God had stayed the waters of Jordan before the children of Israel, reached the kings of the Amorites and of the Canaanites, their hearts melted with fear.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 485.

5. ENTERING INTO A NEW EXPERIENCE

- a. Why had the practice of circumcision been suspended, and why was it now restored? Joshua 5:2–9.

“The suspension of the rite of circumcision since the rebellion at Kadesh had been a constant witness to Israel that their covenant with God, of which it was the appointed symbol, had been broken. And the discontinuance of the Passover, the memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, had been an evidence of the Lord’s displeasure at their desire to return to the land of bondage. Now, however, the years of rejection were ended. Once more God acknowledged Israel as His people, and the sign of the covenant was restored. The rite of circumcision was performed upon all the people who had been born in the wilderness.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 485.

- b. What else marked the victorious condition in which the Israelites now found themselves after the miracle at the Jordan? Joshua 5:10–12.

“The Lord had now signally manifested His power and favor by leading His people over Jordan on dry land, and their enemies could no longer reproach them. The manna, which had continued up to this time, now ceased; for as the Israelites were about to possess Canaan, and eat of the fruits of that goodly land, there was no more need of it.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 159.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can I be looking to the ark of the covenant today?
2. What is the significance of the priests’ willingness to walk into the Jordan?
3. How can I actually become a bearer of the ark of the covenant today?
4. Why does God sometimes choose to make miracles as He did at the Jordan?
5. Why was the rite of circumcision vital at the entrance to the promised land? What rite is significant to us as we seek the heavenly Canaan? Why?

Victory at Jericho

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Hebrews 11:30).

“Christ and angels attended the circuit of the ark around Jericho, and finally cast down the massive walls of the city, and delivered Jericho into the hands of Israel.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 102.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 159–164.

Sunday

January 20

1. AN AWESOME ENCOUNTER

- a. **While Joshua was near Jericho, meditating and praying, whom did he see, and what question did he ask? Joshua 5:13.**

“As Joshua withdrew from the armies of Israel to meditate and pray for God’s special presence to attend him, he saw a Man of lofty stature, clad in warlike garments, with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua did not recognize Him as one of the warriors of Israel, and yet He had no appearance of being an enemy.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 159.

- b. **Who was the warrior of lofty stature and commanding presence that stood before Joshua? What instructions were given? Joshua 5:14, 15.**

“[Joshua 5:13–15 quoted.] This was no common angel. It was the Lord Jesus Christ, He who had conducted the Hebrews through the wilderness, enshrouded in the pillar of fire by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. The place was made sacred by His presence, therefore Joshua was commanded to put off his shoes.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 61.

2. THE TIME IS RIPE

- a. What are we told about Jericho and why its gates were kept shut? What assurance did God give to Joshua? Joshua 6:1, 2.
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“One of the strongest fortresses in the land—the large and wealthy city of Jericho—lay just before [the Israelites.] . . . On the border of a fertile plain abounding with the rich and varied productions of the tropics, its palaces and temples the abode of luxury and vice, this proud city, behind its massive battlements, offered defiance to the God of Israel. Jericho was one of the principal seats of idol worship, being especially devoted to Ashtaroth, the goddess of the moon. Here centered all that was vilest and most degrading in the religion of the Canaanites. The people of Israel, in whose minds were fresh the fearful results of their sin at Beth-peor, could look upon this heathen city only with disgust and horror.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 487.

- b. Explain the instructions God gave through Joshua for the overthrow of the city. Joshua 6:3–8. How did united discipline boost the faith of all?
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“The very plan of continuing this ceremony through so long a time prior to the final overthrow of the walls afforded opportunity for the increase of faith among the Israelites.

“They were to become thoroughly impressed with the idea that their strength was not in the wisdom of man, nor in his might, but only in the God of their salvation. They were thus to become accustomed to putting themselves out of the question and relying wholly upon their divine Leader.

“Would those who today profess to be God’s people conduct themselves thus under similar circumstances? Doubtless many would wish to follow out their own plans and would suggest other ways and means of accomplishing the desired end. They would be loath to submit to so simple an arrangement and one that reflected upon themselves no glory save the merit of obedience. They would also question the possibility of a mighty city being conquered in that manner. But the law of duty is supreme. It should hold sway over human reason. Faith is the living power that presses through every barrier, overrides all obstacles, and plants its banner in the heart of the enemy’s camp.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 163.

3. THE MYSTERIOUS DISPLAY

- a. What did Israel do for the first six days in their compass of Jericho? Joshua 6:9–14. How did the city react to the mysterious display?
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“In obedience to the divine command Joshua marshaled the armies of Israel. No assault was to be made. They were simply to make the circuit of the city, bearing the ark of God and blowing upon trumpets. First came the warriors, a body of chosen men, not now to conquer by their own skill and prowess, but by obedience to the directions given them from God. Seven priests with trumpets followed. Then the ark of God, surrounded by a halo of divine glory, was borne by priests clad in the dress denoting their sacred office. The army of Israel followed, each tribe under its standard. Such was the procession that compassed the doomed city. No sound was heard but the tread of that mighty host and the solemn peal of the trumpets, echoing among the hills and resounding through the streets of Jericho. The circuit completed, the army returned in silence to their tents, and the ark was restored to its place in the tabernacle.

“With wonder and alarm the watchmen of the city marked every move, and reported to those in authority. They knew not the meaning of all this display; but when they beheld that mighty host marching around their city once each day, with the sacred ark and the attendant priests, the mystery of the scene struck terror to the hearts of priest and people. Again they would inspect their strong defenses, feeling certain they could successfully resist the most powerful attack. Many ridiculed the thought that any harm could come to them through these singular demonstrations. Others were awed as they beheld the procession that each day wound about the city.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 488.

- b. What happened on the seventh day? Joshua 6:15, 16, 20; Hebrews 11:30.
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“How easily the armies of heaven brought down the walls that had seemed so formidable to the spies who brought the false report! The word of God was the only weapon used. . . . The work was left to the Almighty.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 161.

4. THE EXTREME DOOM—AND ITS CAUSE

- a. **What did God command about Jericho, its inhabitants, and its goods? How was Joshua's curse in Joshua 6:26 fulfilled? Joshua 6:17–19, 24, 26; 1 Kings 16:34.**
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“The Israelites had not gained the victory by their own power; the conquest had been wholly the Lord's; and as the first fruits of the land, the city, with all that it contained, was to be devoted as a sacrifice to God. It was to be impressed upon Israel that in the conquest of Canaan they were not to fight for themselves, but simply as instruments to execute the will of God; not to seek for riches or self-exaltation, but the glory of Jehovah their King. Before the capture the command had been given, [Joshua 6:17, 18 quoted.]

“All the inhabitants of the city, with every living thing that it contained, . . . were put to the sword. . . . The city itself was burned; its palaces and temples, its magnificent dwellings with all their luxurious appointments, the rich draperies and the costly garments, were given to the flames. . . . The very site of the city was accursed; Jericho was never to be rebuilt as a stronghold; judgments were threatened upon anyone who should presume to restore the walls that divine power had cast down.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 491, 492.

- b. **Why did God pronounce such doom upon Jericho? Deuteronomy 7:2–10; 20:16–18.**
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“[Deuteronomy 7:2; 20:16 quoted.] To many these commands seem to be contrary to the spirit of love and mercy enjoined in other portions of the Bible, but they were in truth the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness. God was about to establish Israel in Canaan, to develop among them a nation and government that should be a manifestation of His kingdom upon the earth. They were not only to be inheritors of the true religion, but to disseminate its principles throughout the world. The Canaanites had abandoned themselves to the foulest and most debasing heathenism, and it was necessary that the land should be cleared of what would so surely prevent the fulfillment of God's gracious purposes.

“The inhabitants of Canaan had been granted ample opportunity for repentance.”—*Ibid.*, p. 492.

5. GOD KNOWS BEST

a. What are we to learn from the conquest of Jericho? Romans 15:4.

“As a people we lack faith. In these days few would follow the directions given through God’s chosen servant as obediently as did the armies of Israel at the taking of Jericho. The Captain of the Lord’s host did not reveal Himself to all the congregation. He communicated only with Joshua, who related the story of this interview to the Hebrews. It rested with them to believe or to doubt the words of Joshua, to follow the commands given by him in the name of the Captain of the Lord’s host, or to rebel against his directions and deny his authority. They could not see the host of angels, marshaled by the Son of God, who led their van; and they might have reasoned: ‘What unmeaning movements are these, and how ridiculous the performance of marching daily around the walls of the city, blowing trumpets of ram’s horns meanwhile! This can have no effect upon those strong towering fortifications.’ . . .

“[God] will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and implicitly obey Him. . . .

“God works mightily for a faithful people who obey His word without questioning or doubt. The Majesty of heaven, with His army of angels, leveled the walls of Jericho without human aid. The armed warriors of Israel had no cause to glory in their achievements. All was done through the power of God. Let the people give up self and the desire to work after their own plans, let them humbly submit to the divine will, and God will revive their strength and bring freedom and victory to His children.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 162–164.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How was Joshua strengthened in advance to carry out a specific strategy?
2. If Jericho had not been destroyed, how might the rest of history been affected?
3. Explain the mysterious way in which God won the battle of Jericho.
4. Why did Israel need to burn everything and give the metals to the treasury?
5. What might be preventing me from experiencing the success God can give?

First Sabbath Offering for the Zambian Union Mission Headquarters

Ever since Zambia's independence from British rule in 1964, this nation has been known as the hub of peace throughout the southern African region. It is a landlocked country of 290,585 mi² [752,612 km²] and is home to around 15.5 million people.

Zambia was declared a Christian nation some 20 years ago and is today known globally as a country that enjoys freedom of worship.

The first missionary to bring the message of Reformation reached this country in 1940. However, the message did not take root until 1970. Even then, the work did not advance as fast as we had hoped due to challenges encountered with our former brethren and the government's decision to ban the registration of churches at that time.

However, our supplications to the Lord were finally answered and the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement was registered with our government in October 1991. Since then, God's work has progressed well. Our current membership is now almost 700 souls.

Our Union Mission headquarters are in the northwest of our country. To promote growth, during our last delegation session it was approved that the headquarters be relocated to Lusaka, the capital city, where there will be more space to put up structures like an herbal clinic, vegetarian restaurant and a training center for missionary workers.

A monumental pillar reflecting the message of Reformation always acts as a spiritual catalyst in finishing God's work here on earth. Unfortunately, our resources are inadequate to expand this great work. "Have you so deep an appreciation of the sacrifice made on Calvary that you are willing to make every other interest subordinate to the work of saving souls? The same intensity of desire to save sinners that marked the life of the Saviour marks the life of His true followers. The Christian has no desire to live for self. He desires to consecrate all that he has and is to the Master's service. He is moved by an inexpressible desire to win souls to Christ."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 10.

It is our sincere hope that the love and sacrifice demonstrated by the Godhead will move every believer to contribute generously toward saving the perishing world.

Thanking and wishing you God's richest blessings in advance,

Your brethren and sisters from Zambia



Agony at Ai

“Israel hath sinned. . . . Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies” (Joshua 7:11, 12).

“Thousands were slain upon the field of battle because God would not bless and prosper a people among whom there was even one sinner, one who had transgressed His word.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 239.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 263–272.

Sunday

January 27

1. HIDDEN DANGER LURKING

- a. After Jericho fell, of what hidden danger was Joshua unaware? Joshua 7:1. Meanwhile, what steps followed in the conquest of Canaan? Joshua 7:2, 3.

“Soon after the fall of Jericho, Joshua determined to attack Ai, a small town among the ravines a few miles to the west of the Jordan Valley. Spies sent to this place brought back the report that the inhabitants were but few, and that only a small force would be needed to overthrow it.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

- b. Based on the report of the spies, how many soldiers were sent to attack Ai? Joshua 7:4 (first part). What mistakes were made at this time?

“The great victory that God had gained for them had made the Israelites self-confident. Because He had promised them the land of Canaan they felt secure, and failed to realize that divine help alone could give them success. Even Joshua laid his plans for the conquest of Ai without seeking counsel from God.

“The Israelites had begun to exalt their own strength and to look with contempt upon their foes. An easy victory was expected.”—*Ibid.*

2. A CALL FOR HEART-SEARCHING

- a. What unpleasant surprise shocked the Israelites at Ai? Joshua 7:4, 5.
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“[Israel’s 3,000 soldiers] rushed to the attack without the assurance that God would be with them. They advanced nearly to the gate of the city, only to encounter the most determined resistance. Panic-stricken at the numbers and thorough preparation of their enemies, they fled in confusion down the steep descent. . . . Though the loss was small as to numbers—but thirty-six men being slain—the defeat was disheartening to the whole congregation. . . . This was the first time they had met the Canaanites in actual battle, and if put to flight before the defenders of this little town, what would be the result in the greater conflicts before them?”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 494.

- b. How did Joshua react to the tragedy? Joshua 7:6–9. What was wrong with his reaction?
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“Joshua manifested a true zeal for the honor of God, yet his petitions were mingled with doubt and unbelief. The thought that God had brought His people over the Jordan to deliver them up to the power of the heathen was a sinful one, unworthy of a leader of Israel. Joshua’s feelings of despondency and distrust were inexcusable in view of the mighty miracles which God had wrought for the deliverance of His people, and the repeated promise that He would be with them.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1881.

“It is a sin in any church not to search for the cause of their darkness and of the afflictions which have been in the midst of them. The church in ----- cannot be a living, prosperous church until they are more awake to the wrongs among them, which hinder the blessing of God from coming upon them.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 520.

“Let the churches who claim to believe the truth, who are advocating the law of God, keep that law and depart from all iniquity. Let the individual members of the church resist the temptations to practice evils and indulge in sin. Let the church commence the work of purification before God by repentance, humiliation, deep heart searching, for we are in the antitypical day of atonement—solemn hour fraught with eternal results.”—*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 378.

3. GOD ANSWERS

- a. How did God graciously respond when Joshua prayed, protesting over the humiliating defeat of the Israelite army at Ai? Joshua 7:10–12.
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“Our merciful God did not visit His servant [Joshua] with wrath because of this error [of despondency and distrust]. He graciously accepted the humiliation and prayers of Joshua, and at the same time gently rebuked his unbelief, and then revealed to him the cause of their defeat.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1881.

- b. What are we to learn from this crisis? 1 Corinthians 10:1–5, 11, 12.
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[Joshua 7:10–12 quoted.]

“I have been shown that God here illustrates how He regards sin among those who profess to be His commandment-keeping people. Those whom He has specially honored with witnessing the remarkable exhibitions of His power, as did ancient Israel, and who will even then venture to disregard His express directions, will be subjects of His wrath. He would teach His people that disobedience and sin are exceedingly offensive to Him and are not to be lightly regarded. He shows us that when His people are found in sin they should at once take decided measures to put that sin from them, that His frown may not rest upon them all. But if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions, His frown will be upon them, and the people of God, as a body, will be held responsible for those sins. In His dealings with His people in the past the Lord shows the necessity of purifying the church from wrongs. One sinner may diffuse darkness that will exclude the light of God from the entire congregation. When the people realize that darkness is settling upon them, and they do not know the cause, they should seek God earnestly, in great humility and self-abasement, until the wrongs which grieve His Spirit are searched out and put away. . . .

“If wrongs are apparent among His people, and if the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, and are alike guilty and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 265, 266.

4. A WORK IN THESE LAST DAYS

- a. What action did God direct Joshua to take in the crisis that had caused weakness and defeat at Ai? Joshua 7:13–15. What can we learn from this?
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“[Some] may witness wrongs, but they do not feel as did Joshua and humble themselves because the danger of souls is felt by them.

“The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God’s professed people. . . .

“Who are standing in the counsel of God at this time? Is it those who virtually excuse wrongs among the professed people of God and who murmur in their hearts, if not openly, against those who would reprove sin? Is it those who take their stand against them and sympathize with those who commit wrong? No, indeed! Unless they repent, and leave the work of Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work and in holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, they will never receive the mark of God’s sealing approval.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 266, 267.

“If the leaders of the church neglect to diligently search out the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon the body, they become responsible for these sins.”—*Ibid.*, p. 269.

- b. How did Joshua obediently proceed? Joshua 7:16–18.
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“Instruction was given to Joshua for the discovery and punishment of the criminal. The lot was to be employed for the detection of the guilty. The sinner was not directly pointed out, the matter being left in doubt for a time, that the people might feel their responsibility for the sins existing among them, and thus be led to searching of heart and humiliation before God. . . .

“Achan the son of Carmi, of the tribe of Judah, was pointed out by the finger of God as the troubler of Israel.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 494, 495.

5. TRUE LEADERSHIP IN A CRISIS

- a. What did Joshua tactfully ask Achan to do, and what was Achan's response? Joshua 7:19–21. How does God regard indifference in times of crisis? Zephaniah 1:12.

“There are many who do not have the discretion of Joshua and who have no special duty to search out wrongs and to deal promptly with the sins existing among them. Let not such . . . stand in the way of those who have this duty to do. . . .

“The manner of Achan's confession was similar to the confessions that some among us have made and will make. They hide their wrongs and refuse to make a voluntary confession until God searches them out, and then they acknowledge their sins. A few persons pass on in a course of wrong until they become hardened. They may even know that the church is burdened. . . . Yet their consciences do not condemn them. They will not relieve the church by humbling their proud, rebellious hearts before God and putting away their wrongs. God's displeasure is upon His people, and He will not manifest His power in the midst of them while sins exist among them and are fostered by those in responsible positions.

“Those who work in the fear of God to rid the church of hindrances and to correct grievous wrongs, that the people of God may see the necessity of abhorring sin and may prosper in purity, and that the name of God may be glorified, will ever meet with resisting influences from the unconsecrated.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 270, 271.

“The church as a whole is in a degree responsible for the wrongs of its individual members because they countenance the evil in not lifting up their voice against it.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 491.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What factors caused the Israelites to be defeated at Ai?
2. What showed faith and what showed doubt in Joshua's prayer to God?
3. Explain the duty of the remnant church that seriously prepares for Christ's second coming.
4. What leadership qualities in Joshua chapter 7 would I be well to develop?
5. Why must I avoid hindering the vital task of expelling sin from the camp?

The Achan Syndrome

“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

“The acquisition of property becomes a mania with some.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 490.

Suggested Readings: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 493–498;
Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 489–495.

Sunday

February 3

1. THE CAUSE OF THE CURSE

- a. When Achan finally admitted his guilt after being identified by God as the culprit in Israel, what action did Joshua take? Joshua 7:22, 23.

- b. Why was it so important that such sins be disclosed? Proverbs 26:2.

“Achan understood well the reserve made and that the treasures of gold and silver which he coveted were the Lord’s.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 269.

“Achan’s sin brought disaster upon the whole nation. For one man’s sin the displeasure of God will rest upon His church till the transgression is searched out and put away. The influence most to be feared by the church is not that of open opposers, infidels, and blasphemers, but of inconsistent professors of Christ. These are the ones that keep back the blessing of the God of Israel and bring weakness upon His people.

“When the church is in difficulty, when coldness and spiritual declension exist, giving occasion for the enemies of God to triumph, then, instead of folding their hands and lamenting their unhappy state, let its members inquire if there is not an Achan in the camp. With humiliation and searching of heart, let each seek to discover the hidden sins that shut out God’s presence.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 497.

2. ACHAN HELD ACCOUNTABLE

- a. **What did God direct the people to do with Achan? Joshua 7:24, 25. Why is his fate a warning for us living so near the close of probation?**
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“When a crisis finally comes, . . . and God speaks in behalf of His people, those who have sinned, those who have been a cloud of darkness and who have stood directly in the way of God’s working for His people, may become alarmed at the length they have gone in murmuring and in bringing discouragement upon the cause; and, like Achan, becoming terrified, they may acknowledge that they have sinned. But their confessions are too late and are not of the right kind to benefit themselves, although they may relieve the cause of God. Such do not make their confessions because of a conviction of their true state and a sense of how displeasing their course has been to God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 271.

“There are many in this day that would designate Achan’s sin as of little consequence, and would excuse his guilt; but it is because they have no realization of the character of sin and its consequences, no sense of the holiness of God and of His requirements. The statement is often heard that God is not particular whether or not we give diligent heed to His word, whether or not we obey all the commandments of His holy law; but the record of His dealing with Achan should be a warning to us. He will in no wise clear the guilty.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 20, 1888.

- b. **How and why was Achan’s fate to be kept in memory? Joshua 7:26. What should this tell us?**
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“Have you considered why it was that all who were connected with Achan were also subjects of the punishment of God? It was because they had not been trained and educated according to the directions given them in the great standard of the law of God. Achan’s parents had educated their son in such a way that he felt free to disobey the Word of the Lord, the principles inculcated in his life led him to deal with his children in such a way that they also were corrupted. Mind acts and reacts upon mind, and the punishment which included the relations of Achan with himself, reveals the fact that all were involved in the transgression.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 998.

3. THE SLIME OF GREED

a. What had enticed Achan to sin? James 1:13–15.

“Achan’s covetousness was excited by the sight of that costly robe of Shinar; even when it had brought him face to face with death he called it ‘a *goodly* Babylonish garment.’ One sin had led to another, and he appropriated the gold and silver devoted to the treasury of the Lord—he robbed God of the first fruits of the land of Canaan.

“The deadly sin that led to Achan’s ruin had its root in covetousness, of all sins one of the most common and the most lightly regarded. While other offenses meet with detection and punishment, how rarely does the violation of the tenth commandment so much as call forth censure. The enormity of this sin, and its terrible results, are the lessons of Achan’s history.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 496.

b. Explain how the evil of covetousness is a denial of faith. Hebrews 13:5.

“Covetousness is an evil of gradual development. Achan had cherished greed of gain until it became a habit, binding him in fetters well-nigh impossible to break. While fostering this evil, he would have been filled with horror at the thought of bringing disaster upon Israel; but his perceptions were deadened by sin, and when temptation came, he fell an easy prey.

“Are not similar sins still committed, in the face of warnings as solemn and explicit? We are as directly forbidden to indulge covetousness as was Achan to appropriate the spoils of Jericho. . . .

“Everywhere its slimy track is seen. It creates discontent and dissension in families; it excites envy and hatred in the poor against the rich; it prompts the grinding oppression of the rich toward the poor. And this evil exists not in the world alone, but in the church. How common even here to find selfishness, avarice, overreaching, neglect of charities, and robbery of God ‘in tithes and offerings.’ Among church members ‘in good and regular standing’ there are, alas! many Achans.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 496, 497.

4. ESCAPING THE SNARE

- a. **What warnings echo down to us against coveting anything that is not ours? Luke 12:15; 1 John 2:15–17. How does this sin hinder God’s work?**
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“It is this increasing devotion to money getting, the selfishness which the desire for gain begets, that removes the favor of God from the church and deadens its spirituality. When the head and hands are constantly occupied with planning and toiling for the accumulation of riches, the claims of God and humanity are forgotten.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 82.

“Instead of giving all for Christ many have taken the golden wedge and a goodly Babylonish garment and hid them in the camp. If the presence of one Achan was sufficient to weaken the whole camp of Israel, can we be surprised at the little success which attends our efforts when every church and almost every family has its Achan?”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 157.

- b. **What other sins which relate to covetousness does God especially hate? Proverbs 6:16–19. How does God view us when we cherish these sins?**
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“Various sins that are cherished and practiced by professed Christians bring the frown of God upon the church. In the day when the Ledger of Heaven shall be opened, the Judge will not in words express to man his guilt, but will cast one penetrating, convicting glance, and every deed, every transaction of life, will be vividly impressed upon the memory of the wrongdoer. The person will not, as in Joshua’s day, need to be hunted out from tribe to family, but his own lips will confess his shame, his selfishness, covetousness, dishonesty, dissembling, and fraud. His sins, hidden from the knowledge of man, will then be proclaimed, as it were, upon the housetop.

“The influence most to be feared by the church is not that of open opposers, infidels, and blasphemers, but of inconsistent professors of Christ. These are the ones who keep back the blessing of the God of Israel and bring weakness upon the church, a reproach that is not easily wiped away.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 493.

“[God’s] Spirit is grieved by the pride, extravagance, dishonesty, and overreaching which are indulged by some professing godliness. All these things bring the frown of God upon His people.”— *Ibid.*, p. 491.

5. TRANSPARENCY IN TRADE

- a. What understanding can help us to place God and our fellowman before our natural desire for worldly gain? Proverbs 15:3; Colossians 3:1–3.
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“The custom of overreaching in trade, which exists in the world, is no example for Christians. They should not deviate from perfect integrity, even in small matters. To sell an article for more than it is worth, taking advantage of the ignorance of purchasers, is fraud. Unlawful gains, petty tricks of trade, exaggeration, competition, underselling a brother who is seeking to pursue an honest business—these things are corrupting the purity of the church, and are ruinous to her spirituality.

“The business world does not lie outside the limits of God’s government. Christianity is not to be merely paraded on the Sabbath and displayed in the sanctuary; it is for every day in the week and for every place. Its claims must be recognized and obeyed in the workshop, at home, and in business transactions with brethren and with the world.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 494.

“The first Christian church had not the privileges and opportunities we have. They were a poor people, but they felt the power of the truth. The object before them was sufficient to lead them to invest all. They felt that the salvation or the loss of a world depended upon their instrumentality. They cast in their all and held themselves in readiness to go or come at the Lord’s bidding.

“We profess to be governed by the same principles, to be influenced by the same spirit. . . . Let us individually go to work to stimulate others by our example of disinterested benevolence.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 156, 157.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What most hinders the blessing of God and weakens His people?
2. How might I be influencing the youth the way Achan did his children?
3. How can I avoid indulging in the beginning roots of covetousness?
4. What danger especially lurks whenever we buy or sell something used?
5. How am I to escape the common snare of coveting worldly gain?

The Blessings and the Curses

“There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them” (Joshua 8:35).

“Only as a reverence for God’s Holy Word was cherished in the hearts of the people, could they hope to fulfill the divine purpose.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 465, 466.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 499–504.

Sunday

February 10

1. A SOLEMN CHOICE

- a. What choice did the Lord set before His people at the border of the promised land, and what can we learn from this? Deuteronomy 11:26–28.

“Obedience is required; and unless you obey you will stand on worse than neutral ground. Unless you are favored with the blessing of God you have His curse. He requires you to be willing and obedient, and says that you shall eat the good of the land. A bitter curse is pronounced on those who come not to the help of the Lord.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 166.

- b. Name the two mountains selected for the pronouncement of the blessings and curses. Deuteronomy 11:29. How were the tribes of Israel divided for this sacred duty? Deuteronomy 27:11–13.

“Ebal and Gerizim, upon opposite sides of the valley, nearly approach each other, their lower spurs seeming to form a natural pulpit, every word spoken on one being distinctly audible on the other, while the mountainsides, receding, afford space for a vast assemblage.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 500.

2. TRAINING THE MIND FOR VICTORY

- a. What command regarding Mount Ebal had been given through Moses, to be performed when the people would pass over Jordan? Deuteronomy 27:2–8.
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- b. What else was to be done for the purpose of fixing the law in the minds of the people? Deuteronomy 6:6–9; 31:19–22.
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“In the days of the wilderness wandering the Lord had made abundant provision for His children to keep in remembrance the words of His law. After the settlement in Canaan the divine precepts were to be repeated daily in every home; they were to be written plainly upon the doorposts and gates, and spread upon memorial tablets. They were to be set to music and chanted by young and old. Priests were to teach these holy precepts in public assemblies, and the rulers of the land were to make them their daily study. ‘Meditate therein day and night,’ the Lord commanded Joshua concerning the book of the law, ‘that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.’ Joshua 1:8.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 464, 465.

- c. What benefit do we, too, gain from memorizing God’s law and meditating on the promises and warnings found in His Word? Psalm 119:11.
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“Several times each day precious, golden moments should be consecrated to prayer and the study of the Scriptures, if it is only to commit a text to memory, that spiritual life may exist in the soul.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 459.

“The mind must be restrained and not allowed to wander. It should be trained to dwell upon the scriptures; even whole chapters may be committed to memory, to be repeated when Satan comes with his temptations. Even while you are walking on the streets, you may read a passage and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in your mind, and God will flash the knowledge obtained into the memory at the very time when it is needed.”—*The West Michigan Herald*, October 26, 1904.

3. CARRYING OUT PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS

- a. How did Joshua carry out the instructions that had been given through Moses with regard to Mount Ebal? Joshua 8:30–32.
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“According to the directions given by Moses, a monument of great stones was erected upon Mount Ebal. Upon these stones, previously prepared by a covering of plaster, the law was inscribed—not only the ten precepts spoken from Sinai and engraved on the tables of stone, but the laws communicated to Moses, and by him written in a book. Beside this monument was built an altar of unhewn stone, upon which sacrifices were offered unto the Lord. The fact that the altar was set up on Mount Ebal, the mountain upon which the curse was put, was significant, denoting that because of their transgressions of God’s law, Israel had justly incurred His wrath, and that it would be at once visited, but for the atonement of Christ, represented by the altar of sacrifice.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 500.

- b. How did Joshua station the leaders and people for that grand ceremony, and what should we notice about the way the stranger was welcomed? Joshua 8:33.
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“Six of the tribes—all descended from Leah and Rachel—were stationed upon Mount Gerizim; while those that descended from the handmaids, together with Reuben and Zebulun, took their position on Ebal, the priests with the ark occupying the valley between them.”—*Ibid.*

“Let those who believe the word of the Lord read the instruction contained in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. There they will learn what kind of education was given to the families of Israel. While God’s chosen people were to stand forth distinct and holy, separate from the nations that knew Him not, they were to treat the stranger kindly. He was not to be looked down upon because he was not of Israel. The Israelites were to love the stranger because Christ died as verily to save him as He did to save Israel. At their feasts of thanksgiving, when they recounted the mercies of God, the stranger was to be made welcome.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 273, 274.

4. AVOIDING FORMALITY IN RELIGIOUS SERVICES

- a. What was the climax of the Mount Ebal ceremony? Joshua 8:34.
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“Silence was proclaimed by the sound of the signal trumpet; and then in the deep stillness, and in the presence of this vast assembly, Joshua, standing beside the sacred ark, read the blessings that were to follow obedience to God’s law. All the tribes on Gerizim responded by an Amen.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 500.

- b. Why was it appropriate for the congregation to say “Amen”? Psalm 106:48. Why is it often appropriate for us to say “Amen” too?
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“When the word of the Lord was spoken to the Hebrews anciently, the command was: ‘And let all the people say, Amen.’ When the ark of the covenant was brought into the city of David, and a psalm of joy and triumph was chanted, ‘all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord.’ This fervent response was an evidence that they understood the word spoken and joined in the worship of God.

“There is too much formality in our religious services. The Lord would have His ministers who preach the word energized by His Holy Spirit; and the people who hear should not sit in drowsy indifference, or stare vacantly about, making no responses to what is said. The impression that is thus given to the unbeliever is anything but favorable for the religion of Christ. These dull, careless professed Christians are not destitute of ambition and zeal when engaged in worldly business; but things of eternal importance do not move them deeply. The voice of God through His messengers may be a pleasant song; but its sacred warnings, reproofs, and encouragements are all unheeded. The spirit of the world has paralyzed them. The truths of God’s word are spoken to leaden ears and hard, unimpressible hearts. There should be wide-awake, active churches to encourage and uphold the ministers of Christ and to aid them in the work of saving souls. Where the church is walking in the light, there will ever be cheerful, hearty responses and words of joyful praise.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 318.

5. SECRETS TO HAPPINESS

- a. What else was included in the ceremony of blessings and cursings? Joshua 8:35. What was to be repeated on a regular basis? Deuteronomy 31:10–13.
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“[Following the reading of the blessings, Joshua] then read the curses, and the tribes on Ebal in like manner gave their assent, thousands upon thousands of voices uniting as the voice of one man in the solemn response. Following this came the reading of the law of God, together with the statutes and judgments that had been delivered to them by Moses.

“Israel had received the law directly from the mouth of God at Sinai; and its sacred precepts, written by His own hand, were still preserved in the ark. Now it had been again written where all could read it. All had the privilege of seeing for themselves the conditions of the covenant under which they were to hold possession of Canaan. All were to signify their acceptance of the terms of the covenant and give their assent to the blessings or curses for its observance or neglect. The law was not only written upon the memorial stones, but was read by Joshua himself in the hearing of all Israel. It had not been many weeks since Moses gave the whole book of Deuteronomy in discourses to the people, yet now Joshua read the law again.

“Not alone the men of Israel, but ‘all the women and the little ones’ listened to the reading of the law; for it was important that they also should know and do their duty.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 500–503.

- b. Name some of the blessings and cursings. Deuteronomy 28:1–13; 27:14–26.
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PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How are the blessings and curses given to ancient Israel relevant today?
2. How has memorizing and meditating upon Scripture benefited me at times?
3. Why was the stranger together with the leaders and people on the mount?
4. In what ways can I be more supportive of the task of my local minister?
5. Why is it important that all learn their duty to God from a young age?

Helping the Gibeonites

“This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them” (Joshua 9:20).

“In the midst of the land a numerous people—the Gibeonites—renounced their heathenism and united with Israel, sharing in the blessings of the covenant.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 369.

Suggested Reading: *The Signs of the Times*, February 7, 1884.

Sunday

February 17

1. A CRAFTY PLOT

- a. **What did the men of Gibeon do in seeing Israel’s victories? Joshua 9:3–6.**

“[At Gilgal, the Israelites] were soon after visited by a strange deputation, who desired to enter into treaty with them. The ambassadors represented that they had come from a distant country, and this seemed to be confirmed by their appearance. Their clothing was old and worn, their sandals were patched, their provisions moldy, and the skins that served them for wine bottles were rent and bound up, as if hastily repaired on the journey.

“In their far-off home—professedly beyond the limits of Palestine—their fellow countrymen, they said, had heard of the wonders which God had wrought for His people, and had sent them to make a league with Israel.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 505.

- b. **Relate the encounter and what Israel should have known. Joshua 9:7–13.**

“The Hebrews had been specially warned against entering into any league with the idolaters of Canaan, and a doubt as to the truth of the strangers’ words arose in the minds of the leaders.”—*Ibid.*

2. A DISAPPOINTING DECEPTION

- a. What mistake did Joshua and the leaders make with regard to the Gibeonites? Why did they fail? Joshua 9:14, 15.
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- b. How did the Israelites react upon seeing they had been deceived? Why were they right in sparing the Gibeonites? Joshua 9:16–20.
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“Great was the indignation of the Israelites as they learned the deception that had been practiced upon them. . . . ‘All the congregation murmured against the princes;’ but the latter refused to break the treaty, though secured by fraud, because they had ‘sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel.’ ‘And the children of Israel smote them not.’ The Gibeonites had pledged themselves to renounce idolatry, and accept the worship of Jehovah; and the preservation of their lives was not a violation of God’s command to destroy the idolatrous Canaanites. Hence the Hebrews had not by their oath pledged themselves to commit sin. And though the oath had been secured by deception, it was not to be disregarded.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 506.

- c. What do we need to realize about the importance of integrity in keeping our word once we have given it? Proverbs 12:22; Psalm 15:1, 4 (last part).
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“The obligation to which one’s word is pledged—if it do not bind him to perform a wrong act—should be held sacred. No consideration of gain, of revenge, or of self-interest can in any way affect the inviolability of an oath or pledge.”—*Ibid.*

“If in any matter you make a statement as to what you will do, and afterward find that you have favored others to your own loss, do not vary a hairsbreadth from principle. Carry out your agreement. By seeking to change your plans you would show that you could not be depended on. And should you draw back in little transactions, you would draw back in larger ones. Under such circumstances some are tempted to deceive, saying, I was not understood. My words have been taken to mean more than I intended. The fact is, they meant just what they said, but lost the good impulse, and then wanted to draw back.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 154.

3. THE FATE OF THE GIBEONITES

- a. **Because the Gibeonites had resorted to trickery, what became their destiny in life? Joshua 9:21–23. How does this show the impact that the God of Israel had made on the surrounding nations?**
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“The Gibeonites were permitted to live, but were attached as bondmen to the sanctuary, to perform all menial services. . . .

“Gibeon . . . ‘was a great city, as one of the royal cities,’ ‘and all the men thereof were mighty.’ It is a striking evidence of the terror with which the Israelites had inspired the inhabitants of Canaan, that the people of such a city should have resorted to so humiliating an expedient to save their lives.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 506.

- b. **How did the Gibeonites respond to the verdict? Joshua 9:24–27.**
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“[Joshua 9:27 quoted.] These conditions [the Gibeonites] gratefully accepted, conscious that they had been at fault, and glad to purchase life on any terms.”—*Ibid.*

- c. **What evidence shows that the Gibeonites would have been blessed if they had been honest, telling the whole truth instead of practicing deception? Exodus 12:48, 49; Leviticus 19:33, 34.**
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“God had made provision that all who would renounce heathenism, and connect themselves with Israel, should share the blessings of the covenant. . . .

“It was no light humiliation to those citizens of a ‘royal city,’ ‘all the men whereof were mighty,’ to be made hewers of wood and drawers of water throughout their generations. But they had adopted the garb of poverty for the purpose of deception, and it was fastened upon them as a badge of perpetual servitude. Thus through all their generations their servile condition would testify to God’s hatred of falsehood.”—*Ibid.*, p. 507.

4. KEEPING PROMISES

- a. **What did the five kings of the Amorites do when they discovered that the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel? Joshua 10:1–5.**

“The submission of Gibeon to the Israelites filled the kings of Canaan with dismay. Steps were at once taken for revenge upon those who had made peace with the invaders. . . . Their movements were rapid.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 507.

- b. **When the Gibeonites saw their danger, what message did they send to Joshua, and what actions did he take as a result? Joshua 10:6–9.**

“[Joshua 10:6 quoted.] The danger threatened not the people of Gibeon alone, but also Israel. This city commanded the passes to central and southern Palestine, and it must be held if the country was to be conquered.

“Joshua prepared to go at once to the relief of Gibeon. The inhabitants of the besieged city had feared that he would reject their appeal, because of the fraud which they had practiced; but since they had submitted to the control of Israel, and had accepted the worship of God, he felt himself under obligation to protect them. He did not this time move without divine counsel, and the Lord encouraged him in the undertaking. . . .

“By marching all night he brought his forces before Gibeon in the morning. Scarcely had the confederate princes mustered their armies about the city when Joshua was upon them.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 507, 508.

- c. **What revealed the amazing power of Israel’s God in behalf of those whom He defends? Joshua 10:10, 11.**

“The immense host fled before Joshua up the mountain pass to Beth-horon; and having gained the height, they rushed down the precipitous descent upon the other side. Here a fierce hailstorm burst upon them.”—*Ibid.*, p. 508.

5. PRAYER + ACTION

- a. **What amazing request did God grant to His faithful servant, Joshua, to the honor and glory of the Creator? Joshua 10:12–14. Why did He do this?**
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“Joshua, looking down from the ridge above, saw that the day would be too short for the accomplishment of his work. If not fully routed, their enemies would again rally, and renew the struggle. [Joshua 10:12, 13 quoted.]”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 508.

“The Spirit of God inspired Joshua’s prayer, that evidence might again be given of the power of Israel’s God. Hence the request did not show presumption on the part of the great leader. Joshua had received the promise that God would surely overthrow these enemies of Israel, yet he put forth as earnest effort as though success depended upon the armies of Israel alone. He did all that human energy could do, and then he cried in faith for divine aid. The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort. Those who achieve the greatest results are those who rely most implicitly upon the Almighty Arm. The man who commanded, “Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon,” is the man who for hours lay prostrate upon the earth in prayer in the camp of Gilgal. The men of prayer are the men of power.

“This mighty miracle testifies that the creation is under the control of the Creator.”—*Ibid.*, p. 509.

- b. **What did God again do that shows that He is in control of nature? Isaiah 38:7, 8. What will He do in the future? Job 38:22, 23; Revelation 16:17, 21.**
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PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have I ever been deceived? If so, how might I have avoided it?
2. Why did Israel remain true to the tricksters who had deceived them?
3. In the story of the Gibeonites, what evidence shows that lying does not pay?
4. Why did God prosper Israel in the battle against the Amorites?
5. What will happen in the future that will show that God controls the elements of nature?

First Sabbath Offering for World Disaster Relief

“The poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” (Deuteronomy 15:11).

“And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee” (Leviticus 25:35).

Have you ever imagined coming home on a given day and suddenly face an earthquake, hurricane, or flood? Imagine, everything you took your whole life to build, is destroyed in a matter of minutes? Every year, around the world, thousands of people face this ordeal—falling into great poverty and need. Among these crowds are our brothers—members of the church—who are part of our family, and who, after a natural disaster, are deprived of everything they have, becoming dependent on support to start a new life. Over the past year, they have faced it all—fires, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and even volcanic eruptions. In all these cases, we feel our God protecting His people, saving lives and property. However, in many situations, the welfare department of our church has had to invest means to provide food, water and medicines, rebuild homes and churches, assist families who have lost crops, provide medical treatment, and sometimes even provide for emergency surgeries. At such times, the money from the offerings collected annually for the worldwide fund for natural disasters is a boon in the lives of these brethren. Our giving can go to them to help provide shelter, stability, and the comforting feeling of belonging to the family of Christ.

“Many are God’s promises to those who minister to His afflicted ones.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 306. Remember, as we open wide our hand to the poor and needy, we are contributing to our brother who is part of the Master’s family. Let us each do our best and be sure that our God will greatly bless our life and multiply our resources, for our money will be of great value to take care of our brethren who suffer in the most difficult places in the world.



The General Conference Welfare Department

God Directs the Conquest

“As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15).

“The Lord promised Joshua that He would be with him as He had been with Moses, and He would make Canaan an easy conquest to him, provided he would be faithful to observe all His commandments.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 156, 157.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 510, 511.

Sunday

February 24

1. FORMIDABLE FOES

- a. What happened to southern Canaan soon after the victory at Beth-horon? Joshua 10:40–43.

“The victory at Beth-horon was speedily followed by the conquest of southern Canaan.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 510.

- b. What did the kings of northern Palestine do when they heard of the success obtained by the Hebrew nation? Joshua 11:1–5.

“The tribes of northern Palestine, terrified by the success which had attended the armies of Israel, now entered into a league against them. At the head of this confederacy was Jabin, king of Hazor, a territory to the west of Lake Merom. ‘And they went out, they and all their hosts with them.’ This army was much larger than any that the Israelites had before encountered in Canaan.”—*Ibid.*

2. VICTORIES FOR THE FAITHFUL

- a. What should we observe from the way the Lord encouraged Joshua and again intervened for His faithful people? Joshua 11:6–8. What can we learn from this?
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“Near Lake Merom [Joshua] fell upon the camp of the allies and utterly routed their forces.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 510.

“God will do marvelous things for those who trust in Him. It is because His professed people trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf, that they have no more strength. He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and implicitly obey Him.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 163.

“The faith of the consecrated worker is to stand every test brought to bear upon it. God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need and to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand. He will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 242.

- b. What was done with the horses and chariots of the conquered army? Why? Joshua 11:9; Psalm 20:7–9.
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“The chariots and horses that had been the pride and boast of the Canaanites were not to be appropriated by Israel. At the command of God the chariots were burned, and the horses lamed, and thus rendered unfit for use in battle. The Israelites were not to put their trust in chariots or horses, but ‘in the name of the Lord their God.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 510.

- c. Unlike at Jericho, what was Israel to do with the doomed cities, livestock, and spoil? How faithful were they in following God’s directions? Joshua 11:10–14.
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“One by one the cities were taken, and Hazor, the stronghold of the confederacy, was burned.”—*Ibid.*, p. 510.

3. REACHING THE GOAL ASSIGNED

- a. What summarizes Joshua's procedure in the conquest of Canaan? Joshua 11:18, 19.
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"The war was continued for several years, but its close found Joshua master of Canaan."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 510, 511.

- b. When the Lord had promised to rid Canaan of all the wicked nations that dwelt therein, what plan had He put before the Israelites? Against what danger had He cautioned them? Deuteronomy 7:21, 22.
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- c. Despite all the bloodshed in these conquests, what was the Almighty's goal for the overall benefit of humanity? Deuteronomy 7:23–26. What reveals that God also called for a pause in this violent task? Joshua 11:23.
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"That which corrupts the body tends to corrupt the soul. It unfits the user for communion with God, unfits him for high and holy service.

"In the Promised Land the discipline begun in the wilderness was continued under circumstances favorable to the formation of right habits. The people were not crowded together in cities, but each family had its own landed possession, ensuring to all the health-giving blessings of a natural, unperturbed life."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 280.

"Though the power of the Canaanites had been broken, they had not been fully dispossessed. On the west the Philistines still held a fertile plain along the seacoast, while north of them was the territory of the Sidonians. Lebanon also was in the possession of the latter people; and to the south, toward Egypt, the land was still occupied by the enemies of Israel.

"Joshua was not, however, to continue the war."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 511.

4. A NECESSARY TASK

- a. **Who had fixed the borders of the land in advance? To whom had the division of the land been entrusted? Numbers 34:1, 2, 13, 17, 18.**
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“There was another work for the great leader to perform before he should relinquish the command of Israel. The whole land, both the parts already conquered and that which was yet unsubdued, was to be apportioned among the tribes. And it was the duty of each tribe to fully subdue its own inheritance. If the people should prove faithful to God, He would drive out their enemies from before them; and He promised to give them still greater possessions if they would but be true to His covenant.

“To Joshua, with Eleazar the high priest, and the heads of the tribes, the distribution of the land was committed, the location of each tribe being determined by lot. Moses himself had fixed the bounds of the country as it was to be divided among the tribes when they should come in possession of Canaan, and had appointed a prince from each tribe to attend to the distribution.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 511.

- b. **How was the location of each tribe to be determined, and what rule was to be followed respecting the size of each one? Numbers 26:54–56.**
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- c. **What inheritance did the Levites receive? Numbers 18:20, 21; 35:1–3, 7, 8.**
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“The appointed ministers of the sanctuary, the Levites received no landed inheritance; they dwelt together in cities set apart for their use, and received their support from the tithes and the gifts and offerings devoted to God’s service. They were the teachers of the people, guests at all their festivities, and everywhere honored as servants and representatives of God. To the whole nation was given the command: ‘Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.’ ‘Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance.’ Deuteronomy 12:19; 10:9.”—*Education*, pp. 148, 149.

5. NO EXCUSES

- a. What claim did the children of Joseph make because of their numbers, and how did Joshua respond? Joshua 14:4, 5; 17:14–18.
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“In consideration of their superior numbers, these tribes [Ephraim and Manasseh] demanded a double portion of territory. The lot designated for them was the richest in the land, including the fertile plain of Sharon; but many of the principal towns in the valley were still in possession of the Canaanites, and the tribes shrank from the toil and danger of conquering their possessions, and desired an additional portion in territory already subdued. The tribe of Ephraim was one of the largest in Israel, as well as the one to which Joshua himself belonged, and its members naturally regarded themselves as entitled to special consideration. ‘Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit,’ they said, ‘seeing I am a great people?’ But no departure from strict justice could be won from the inflexible leader.

“His answer was, ‘If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.’

“Their reply showed the real cause of complaint. They lacked faith and courage to drive out the Canaanites. . . .

“Being a great people, as they claimed, they were fully able to make their own way, as did their brethren. With the help of God they need not fear the chariots of iron.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 513, 514.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What should give us courage when faced with a foe bigger than we have ever experienced?
2. What “chariots and horses” might I be leaning on too heavily in my life?
3. Although God told Joshua to conquer Canaan, why did He give a pause?
4. What was promised to each tribe if they would be true to the covenant?
5. How was the spirit of Joshua different from those among his tribe?

Early Life in Canaan

“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them” (Joshua 18:1).

“The land to which we are traveling is in every sense far more attractive than was the land of Canaan to the children of Israel. They were led by the hand of God. Christ Himself gave them a description of the country in which they were to find a home; for He wished to place before them every incentive to press on with hope and courage. . . . They had need of courage and constant faith.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 29, 1881.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 512–518.

Sunday

March 3

1. A MAN OF COURAGE

a. Before the land was distributed, how did Caleb testify of his experience from forty years prior? Joshua 14:6–9. How had he shown courage before?

b. What can we learn from God’s promise to Caleb? Numbers 14:22–24.

“While the doubting ones talk of impossibilities, while they tremble at the thought of high walls and strong giants, let the faithful Calebs, who have ‘another spirit,’ come to the front. The truth of God, which bringeth salvation, will go forth to the people if ministers and professed believers will not hedge up its way, as did the unfaithful spies. Our work is aggressive. Something must be done to warn the world; and let no voice be heard that will encourage selfish interests to the neglect of missionary fields. We must engage in the work with heart and soul and voice; both mental and physical powers must be aroused. All heaven is interested in our work, and angels of God are ashamed of our weak efforts.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 380, 381.

2. THE FAITH OF AN AGED WARRIOR

- a. What refreshing request did 85-year-old Caleb make? Joshua 14:10–12. How is his amazing courage and trust in God inspiring to us?
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“Zeal and energy must be intensified; talents that are rusting from inaction must be pressed into service. The voice that would say, ‘Wait; do not allow yourself to have burdens imposed upon you,’ is the voice of the cowardly spies. We want Calebs now who will press to the front—chieftains in Israel who with courageous words will make a strong report in favor of immediate action. When the selfish, ease-loving, panic-stricken people, fearing tall giants and inaccessible walls, clamor for retreat, let the voice of the Calebs be heard, even though the cowardly ones stand with stones in their hands, ready to beat them down for their faithful testimony.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 383.

- b. How was Caleb’s faithful claim blessed? Joshua 14:13–15.
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“Caleb’s faith now was just what it was when his testimony had contradicted the evil report of the spies. He had believed God’s promise that He would put His people in possession of Canaan, and in this he had followed the Lord fully. He had endured with his people the long wandering in the wilderness, thus sharing the disappointments and burdens of the guilty; yet he made no complaint of this, but exalted the mercy of God that had preserved him in the wilderness when his brethren were cut off. Amid all the hardships, perils, and plagues of the desert wanderings, and during the years of warfare since entering Canaan, the Lord had preserved him; and now at upwards of fourscore his vigor was unabated. He did not ask for himself a land already conquered, but the place which above all others the spies had thought it impossible to subdue. By the help of God he would wrest his stronghold from the very giants whose power had staggered the faith of Israel. It was no desire for honor or aggrandizement that prompted Caleb’s request. The brave old warrior was desirous of giving to the people an example that would honor God, and encourage the tribes fully to subdue the land which their fathers had deemed unconquerable.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 512, 513.

3. FAITH THAT WORKS

- a. Explain how Caleb's courageous faith was demonstrated in works, even in his old age. Joshua 15:13, 14.
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"Caleb obtained the inheritance upon which his heart had been set for forty years, and, trusting in God to be with him, he 'drove thence the three sons of Anak.' Having thus secured a possession for himself and his house, his zeal did not abate; he did not settle down to enjoy his inheritance, but pushed on to further conquests for the benefit of the nation and the glory of God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 513.

- b. Explain the difference in outcome between the experience of Joshua and Caleb versus that of the unbelieving spies. Numbers 14:30–32; 1 Corinthians 10:5.
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"The cowards and rebels had perished in the wilderness, but the righteous spies ate of the grapes of Eschol. To each was given according to his faith. The unbelieving had seen their fears fulfilled. Notwithstanding God's promise, they had declared that it was impossible to inherit Canaan, and they did not possess it. But those who trusted in God, looking not so much to the difficulties to be encountered as to the strength of their Almighty Helper, entered the goodly land."—*Ibid.*

- c. What does God want us to realize about the power of faith? 1 John 5:4.
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"All things are possible to him that believeth; and whatsoever things we desire when we pray, if we believe that we receive them we shall have them. This faith will penetrate the darkest cloud and bring rays of light and hope to the drooping, desponding soul. It is the absence of this faith and trust which brings perplexity, distressing fears, and surmisings of evil. God will do great things for His people when they put their entire trust in Him."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 140.

4. SHARING BURDENS IN UNITY

- a. Which tribes were located (a) on the east side of the Jordan; (b) on the west side of the Jordan? (To view the division of Canaan among the twelve tribes, see a Bible map.) Numbers 34:14, 15; Joshua 13:7, 8.
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“Two of the tribes of Israel, Gad and Reuben, with half the tribe of Manasseh, had received their inheritance before crossing the Jordan. To a pastoral people, the wide upland plains and rich forests of Gilead and Bashan, offering extensive grazing land for their flocks and herds, had attractions which were not to be found in Canaan itself, and the two and a half tribes, desiring to settle here, had pledged themselves to furnish their proportion of armed men to accompany their brethren across the Jordan and to share their battles till they also should enter upon their inheritance. The obligation had been faithfully discharged. When the ten tribes entered Canaan forty thousand of ‘the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh . . . prepared for war passed over before the Lord unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.’ Joshua 4:12, 13. For years they had fought bravely by the side of their brethren. Now the time had come for them to get unto the land of their possession. As they had united with their brethren in the conflicts, so they had shared the spoils; and they returned ‘with much riches . . . and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment,’ all of which they were to share with those who had remained with the families and flocks.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 517, 518.

- b. Where was the headquarters of the nation? Joshua 4:19; 10:6 (first part).
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“[At the first encampment in Canaan], Joshua ‘circumcised the children of Israel;’ ‘and the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover.’ . . . And the Lord declared to Joshua, ‘This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you,’ and in allusion to this the place of their encampment was called Gilgal, ‘a rolling away,’ or ‘rolling off.’ ”—*Ibid.*, pp. 485, 486.

5. A NEW HEADQUARTERS

- a. After the claim of Joseph's children had been settled, to where was the tabernacle moved? Joshua 18:1, 10. Why? How long was it there?

“Heretofore Gilgal had been the headquarters of the nation and the seat of the tabernacle. But now the tabernacle was to be removed to the place chosen for its permanent location. This was Shiloh, a little town in the lot of Ephraim. It was near the center of the land, and was easy of access to all the tribes. Here a portion of country had been thoroughly subdued, so that the worshipers would not be molested. [Joshua 18:1 quoted.] The tribes that were still encamped when the tabernacle was removed from Gilgal followed it, and pitched near Shiloh. Here these tribes remained until they dispersed to their possessions.

“The ark remained at Shiloh for three hundred years, until, because of the sins of Eli's house, it fell into the hands of the Philistines, and Shiloh was ruined. The ark was never returned to the tabernacle here, the sanctuary service was finally transferred to the temple at Jerusalem.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 514.

- b. What valuable practice was later instituted at Shiloh? Judges 21:19.

“As a means of education an important place was filled by the feasts of Israel. In ordinary life the family was both a school and a church, the parents being the instructors in secular and in religious lines. But three times a year seasons were appointed for social intercourse and worship. First at Shiloh, and afterward at Jerusalem, these gatherings were held.”—*Education*, pp. 41, 42.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did God say Caleb had “another spirit” suited to the promised land?
2. How can I develop an attitude more like Caleb than like Joseph's children?
3. What do I need to realize about faith that perhaps I have not seen before?
4. What kind of faith was exercised by those tribes east of the Jordan?
5. Name some of the blessings reaped by the location of Shiloh.

Dealing With Misunderstanding

“He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Proverbs 14:29).

“No one was ever reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 519.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 518–520.

Sunday

March 10

1. ACROSS THE MIGHTY RIVER

- a. The children of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh were all situated on the east side of Jordan. What problems were associated with having such a distant location from the sanctuary? Joshua 22:10.

“[These tribes] were now to dwell at a distance from the sanctuary of the Lord, and it was with an anxious heart that Joshua witnessed their departure, knowing how strong would be the temptations, in their isolated and wandering life, to fall into the customs of the heathen tribes that dwelt upon their borders.

“While the minds of Joshua and other leaders were still oppressed with anxious forebodings, strange tidings reached them. Beside the Jordan, near the place of Israel’s miraculous passage of the river, the two and a half tribes had erected a great altar, similar to the altar of burnt offering at Shiloh.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 518.

- b. How did the remaining tribes react? Why? Joshua 22:11, 12.

“The law of God prohibited, on pain of death, the establishment of another worship than that at the sanctuary. If such was the object of this altar, it would, if permitted to remain, lead the people away from the true faith.”—*Ibid.*

2. COOLING DOWN THE FURY

- a. When the two and a half tribes east of Jordan built an altar, what calm approach cooled down the initial reaction of the others? Joshua 22:13, 14.
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“The representatives of the people assembled at Shiloh, and in the heat of their excitement and indignation proposed to make war at once upon the offenders. Through the influence of the more cautious, however, it was decided to send first a delegation to obtain from the two and a half tribes an explanation of their conduct. Ten princes, one from each tribe, were chosen. At their head was Phinehas, who had distinguished himself by his zeal in the matter of Peor.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 518.

- b. Explain the appeal that was made to the eastern tribes. Joshua 22:15–18.
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“The two and a half tribes had been at fault in entering, without explanation, upon an act open to such grave suspicions. The ambassadors, taking it for granted that their brethren were guilty, met them with sharp rebuke. They accused them of rebelling against the Lord, and bade them remember how judgments had been visited upon Israel for joining themselves to Baalpeor.”—*Ibid.*

- c. To what experience was Phinehas referring? Numbers 25:1–9. What should we learn from the spirit he manifested toward his brethren? Joshua 22:19.
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“In behalf of all Israel, Phinehas stated to the children of Gad and Reuben that if they were unwilling to abide in that land without an altar for sacrifice, they would be welcome to a share in the possessions and privileges of their brethren on the other side.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 518, 519.

“We need good, heart religion and divine wisdom to deal with human minds, that we shall not only reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, but we shall take the erring in our arms of faith and bear them to the cross of Christ.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16, p. 339.

3. REASONING TOGETHER

- a. How serious a comparison did the tribes on the western side of Jordan make regarding the altar built on the east side of Jordan? Joshua 22:20. What can we learn from their mistaken zeal for the right?
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“Care should be exercised by all Christians, to shun the two extremes, of laxness in dealing with sin on the one hand, and harsh judgment and groundless suspicion on the other. The Israelites who manifested so much zeal against the men of Gad and Reuben remembered how, in Achan’s case, God had rebuked the lack of vigilance to discover the sins existing among them. Then they resolved to act promptly and earnestly in the future; but in seeking to do this they went to the opposite extreme. Instead of meeting their brethren with censure, they should first have made courteous inquiry to learn all the facts in the case.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 999.

- b. How did the children of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh explain their reason for the altar on the east side of Jordan? Joshua 22:21–29.
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“The accused explained that their altar was not intended for sacrifice, but simply as a witness that, although separated by the river, they were of the same faith as their brethren in Canaan. They had feared that in future years their children might be excluded from the tabernacle, as having no part in Israel. Then this altar, erected after the pattern of the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, would be a witness that its builders were also worshipers of the living God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 519.

- c. How did the reasoning approach prove to be successful? Joshua 22:30, 31.
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“With great joy the ambassadors accepted this explanation, and immediately carried back the tidings to those who sent them. All thoughts of war were dismissed, and the people united in rejoicing, and praise to God.”—*Ibid.*

4. WISDOM IN CALMNESS

- a. To reveal that their intentions were honorable in having an altar east of Jordan, what did the children of Gad and Reuben do? Joshua 22:34.

“The children of Gad and Reuben now placed upon their altar an inscription pointing out the purpose for which it was erected; and they said, ‘It shall be a witness between us that Jehovah is God.’ Thus they endeavored to prevent future misapprehension and to remove what might be a cause of temptation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 519.

- b. What wise lessons are we to learn from this experience among the tribes? Proverbs 14:17, 29; James 1:19.

“How often serious difficulties arise from a simple misunderstanding, even among those who are actuated by the worthiest motives; and without the exercise of courtesy and forbearance, what serious and even fatal results may follow. . . .

“While very sensitive to the least blame in regard to their own course, many are too severe in dealing with those whom they suppose to be in error.”—*Ibid.*

“The powers of darkness will assault every soul, but let us not join with the evil one in his work, and deal with severity to discourage and dishearten the weak and erring. Let us be pitiful, compassionate one to another, and let an influence go out from us to heal, to bind up, to establish, rather than to wound and to uproot. There is altogether too much haste . . . and often that which we think is justice, the Lord writes in his book as oppression. . . . Let us love one another, be kind and courteous.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 24, 1893.

- c. What other principles should we keep in mind when dealing with our brethren? 1 Corinthians 13:4; Ephesians 4:32.

“In all your transactions with your fellow men never forget that you are dealing with God’s property. Be kind; be pitiful; be courteous. Respect God’s purchased possession. Treat one another with tenderness and courtesy.”—*My Life Today*, p. 235.

5. WHEN FALSELY ACCUSED

- a. What should we remember when we are falsely accused? What attitude should we have? 1 Peter 2:19–24; 4:14–16.

“The wisdom displayed by the Reubenites and their companions is worthy of imitation. While honestly seeking to promote the cause of true religion, they were misjudged and severely censured; yet they manifested no resentment. They listened with courtesy and patience to the charges of their brethren before attempting to make their defense, and then fully explained their motives and showed their innocence. Thus the difficulty which had threatened such serious consequences was amicably settled.

“Even under false accusation those who are in the right can afford to be calm and considerate. God is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and we can safely leave our case in His hands. He will as surely vindicate the cause of those who put their trust in Him as He searched out the guilt of Achan. Those who are actuated by the spirit of Christ will possess that charity which suffers long and is kind.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 520.

“How much of evil would be averted, if all, when falsely accused, would avoid recrimination, and in its stead employ mild, conciliating words. And at the same time, those who in their zeal to oppose sin have indulged unjust suspicions, should ever seek to take the most favorable view of their brethren, and should rejoice when they are found guiltless.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 12, 1881.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. To what perils are isolated members of the church especially exposed?
2. What examples do I recall when a calmer approach may have yielded better results in dealing with others?
3. Why does honest, open interaction in the spirit of Christ always pay off?
4. With what attitude should I approach those whom I think are in error?
5. If I feel that I am falsely accused, what knowledge will lead me to leave my case in God’s hands? How will this affect my frame of mind?

The Cities of Refuge

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9).

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 515–517.

Sunday

March 17

1. A MERCIFUL PROVISION

- a. What provision was made in behalf of those in Israel who unintentionally killed another person? Numbers 35:9–12; Joshua 20:1–3.

- b. How many cities of refuge were assigned? Where? Numbers 35:13, 14.

- c. Why and for whom were these cities necessary? Numbers 35:15.

“This merciful provision was rendered necessary by the ancient custom of private vengeance, by which the punishment of the murderer devolved on the nearest relative or the next heir of the deceased. In cases where guilt was clearly evident it was not necessary to wait for a trial by the magistrates. The avenger might pursue the criminal anywhere and put him to death wherever he should be found. The Lord did not see fit to abolish this custom at that time, but He made provision to ensure the safety of those who should take life unintentionally.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 515.

2. PATHWAYS TO REFUGE

- a. Explain the distribution of the cities of refuge and the procedure for making use of them. Joshua 20:4–6. What distinction was made between willful murder and involuntary manslaughter? Numbers 35:16–24.
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“The cities of refuge were so distributed as to be within a half day’s journey of every part of the land. The roads leading to them were always to be kept in good repair; all along the way signposts were to be erected bearing the word ‘Refuge’ in plain, bold characters, that the fleeing one might not be delayed for a moment. Any person—Hebrew, stranger, or sojourner—might avail himself of this provision. But while the guiltless were not to be rashly slain, neither were the guilty to escape punishment. The case of the fugitive was to be fairly tried by the proper authorities, and only when found innocent of intentional murder was he to be protected in the city of refuge.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 515.

- b. What was the rule in case of trial for murder? Numbers 35:30. As far as the number of witnesses is concerned, what rule was repeated in the New Testament? Matthew 18:16; 1 Timothy 5:19. Why is this so important?
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“Personal enmity, or the prospect of personal advantage, has ruined the reputation and usefulness of thousands of innocent men. . . . One man might be controlled by prejudice, selfishness, or malice. But it was not likely that two or more persons would be so perverted as to unite in bearing false witness; and even should they do so, a separate examination would lead to a discovery of the truth.

“This merciful provision contains a lesson for the people of God until the close of time. It was Christ who gave to Moses those explicit directions for the Hebrew host; and when personally with His disciples on earth, the great Leader repeated the same lesson as He taught them, how to treat the erring. One man’s testimony was not to acquit or to condemn. One man’s views and opinions were not to settle disputed questions. . . . God has made it the duty of His servants to be subject one to another. No one man’s judgment is to control in any important matter. Mutual consideration and respect imparts proper dignity to the ministry, and unites the servants of God in close bonds of love and harmony.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

3. A SYMBOL OF REFUGE

- a. On what condition was the refugee protected from the avengers, and when was he free to go home? Numbers 35:25–32.
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- b. Who is our refuge from the death due for sin? Psalm 9:9; Romans 8:1.
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“The same merciful Saviour who appointed those temporal cities of refuge has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

- c. How does Christ urge us to take refuge in Him? 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2; Hebrews 10:26, 27. How is this illustrated through the cities of refuge?
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“If the fugitive would escape with his life, there must be no delay; family and employment must be left behind, there was no time to say farewell to loved ones. His life is at stake, and every other interest must be sacrificed to the one purpose—to reach the city of refuge. Weariness is forgotten, difficulties are unheeded. He does not for one moment slacken his pace until he is safe within the walls of the city.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

“We are living in the last time, and Satan is now working with masterly power in order that with subtle temptations he may overcome those who believe in Jesus. But we are to be ‘kept by the power of God’; therefore, in temptation give glory to God who is able and will keep the believing soul so that he shall not be overcome by the wily foe. . . .

“The crafty deceiver has been found to be an accuser, a liar, a tormentor and a murderer; but whatever he may have led others to say concerning you, the Lord can say to him as He said to Peter, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan.’ He can say to him, ‘You shall not come in between this soul and Me. You shall not interpose yourself between Me and the soul for whom I died a ransom.’ ”—*The Upward Look*, p. 42.

4. THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE

a. How does God consider the shedding of blood? Numbers 35:33, 34.

b. What ceremony occurred when someone was found slain? Deuteronomy 21:1–9. What does this tell us about God’s hatred of sin and His regard for human life?

“After the most diligent search had failed to discover the murderer, the rulers were by this solemn ceremony to show their abhorrence of the crime. They were not to regard with carelessness and negligence the deeds of the guilty. In all their acts they were to show that sin has a contaminating influence—that it leaves a stain upon every land and every person who will not by all possible means seek to bring the wrong-doer to justice. God regards as His enemies those who will by any act of negligence shield the guilty. They are in His sight partakers in the evil deeds of the sinner. . . .

“Sin may be called by false names, and glossed over by plausible excuses and pretended good motives, but this does not lessen its guilt in the sight of God. Wherever it may be found, sin is offensive to God, and will surely meet its punishment.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

c. What other things are considered murder in God’s eyes? 1 John 3:15.

“All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for ‘whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer’); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health—all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

“The spirit of hatred and revenge originated with Satan, and it led him to put to death the Son of God. Whoever cherishes malice or unkindness is cherishing the same spirit, and its fruit will be unto death.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 56.

5. HOPE FOR ALL SEEKING REFUGE

- a. What provision has been made for our refuge today? John 10:14, 15.
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“The same merciful Saviour who appointed those temporal cities of refuge has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon. . . .

“The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hiding place in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul. Satan, the great adversary, is on the track of every transgressor of God’s holy law, and he who is not sensible of his danger, and does not earnestly seek shelter in the eternal refuge, will fall a prey to the destroyer.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 516, 517.

- b. What role does the church have in this process? John 10:16.
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“The church is God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 11.

“God’s Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are ‘like apples of gold in pictures of silver.’” — *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 69.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who established the cities of refuge, and for what purpose?
2. Why is it so important to have two or more witnesses in any trial?
3. What should we learn from the haste needed in going to the city of refuge?
4. What do these cities teach us about God’s mercy and justice?
5. When is Christ a sure Refuge for me? How can I help others find this?

Joshua's Final Message

“Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

“You may yet become sanctified through the truth; or you may, if you choose, walk in the darkness of unbelief, lose heaven, and lose all. By walking in the light and working out the will of God, you may overcome your selfish nature.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 214.

Suggested Readings: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 521–524;
Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 361–368.

Sunday

March 24

1. A SOLEMN GATHERING

- a. What condition did Israel finally enjoy for some time? Of what did Joshua then remind the people? Joshua 23:1–4; 24:11–13.
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- b. With what assurances did Joshua exhort them? Joshua 23:5–10. What should we learn from the commitment required of them?
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“[The people] were to form no allegiance with the idolatrous nations that God had appointed to utter destruction. They were forbidden to manifest the least respect for the gods of the heathen. . . . They were warned that familiarity with idolatry would remove their abhorrence of it, and would expose them to God’s displeasure.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 19, 1881.

“If we love the things of the world and have pleasure in unrighteousness or fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness we have put the stumblingblock of our iniquity before our face and have set up idols in our heart. And unless by determined effort we put them away we shall never be acknowledged as the sons and daughters of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 164.

2. A WARNING AGAINST MIXED MARRIAGES

- a. What warning did Joshua give as a key factor to help God's people reduce their chances of slipping into idolatry? Joshua 23:11–13.
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- b. How is this solemn warning repeated in the Christian era? 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; 1 Corinthians 7:39.
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“Ask yourself: ‘Will not an unbelieving husband lead my thoughts away from Jesus? He is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God; will he not lead me to enjoy the things that he enjoys?’ The path to eternal life is steep and rugged. Take no additional weights to retard your progress. . . .

“As a child of God, a subject of Christ's kingdom, the purchase of His blood, how can you connect yourself with one who does not acknowledge His claims, who is not controlled by His Spirit? . . . Though the companion of your choice were in all other respects worthy (which he is not), yet he has not accepted the truth for this time; he is an unbeliever, and you are forbidden of heaven to unite yourself with him. You cannot, without peril to your soul, disregard this divine injunction.

“I would warn you of your danger before it shall be too late. You listen to smooth, pleasant words and are led to believe that all will be well; but you do not read the motives that prompt these fair speeches. You cannot see the depths of wickedness hidden in the heart. You cannot look behind the scenes and discern the snares that Satan is laying for your soul. He would lead you to pursue such a course that he can obtain easy access to aim his shafts of temptation against you. Do not give him the least advantage. While God moves upon the minds of His servants, Satan works through the children of disobedience. There is no concord between Christ and Belial. The two cannot harmonize. To connect with an unbeliever is to place yourself on Satan's ground. You grieve the Spirit of God and forfeit His protection. Can you afford to have such terrible odds against you in fighting the battle for everlasting life? . . .

“Remember, you have a heaven to gain, an open path to perdition to shun. God means what He says.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 363–365.

3. OBEDIENT LOVE TO GOD

- a. Why is inordinate affection a problem? Isaiah 5:18–21; Colossians 3:5, 6.
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“One of the greatest dangers that besets the people of God today, is that of association with the ungodly; especially in uniting themselves in marriage with unbelievers. With many, the love for the human eclipses the love for the divine. They take the first step in backsliding by venturing to disregard the Lord’s express command; and complete apostasy is too often the result. It has ever proved a dangerous thing for men to carry out their own will in opposition to the requirements of God. . . .

“As a rule, those who choose for their friends and companions, persons who reject Christ and trample upon God’s law, eventually become of the same mind and spirit.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 1000.

“There is in the Christian world an astonishing, alarming indifference to the teaching of God’s word in regard to the marriage of Christians with unbelievers. . . . Men and women who are otherwise sensible and conscientious close their ears to counsel; they are deaf to the appeals and entreaties of friends and kindred and of the servants of God. . . , and the friend who is faithful enough to utter a remonstrance is treated as an enemy. All this is as Satan would have it. He weaves his spell about the soul, and it becomes bewitched, infatuated. Reason lets fall the reins of self-control upon the neck of lust, unsanctified passion bears sway, until, too late, the victim awakens to a life of misery and bondage.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 365, 366.

- b. Explain the cause-and-effect reality Joshua presented. Joshua 23:14–16.
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“God’s plan for the salvation of men, is perfect in every particular. If we will faithfully perform our allotted part, all will be well with us. It is man’s apostasy that causes discord, and brings wretchedness and ruin. God never uses His power to oppress the creatures of His hand. He never requires more than man is able to perform; never punishes His disobedient children more than is necessary to bring them to repentance; or to deter others from following their example. Rebellion against God is inexcusable.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 19, 1881.

4. CHOOSING GOD

- a. What appeal did Joshua make? Joshua 24:1, 14, 15. How can this inspire us?
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“The worship of idols was still to some extent secretly practiced, and Joshua endeavored now to bring [the people] to a decision that should banish this sin from Israel.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 523.

“If the favor of God was worth anything, it was worth everything. Thus Joshua had decided; and after weighing the whole matter, he had determined to serve Him with full purpose of heart. And more than this, he would endeavour to induce his family to pursue the same course. . . .

“The oft-repeated warnings against idolatry addressed to the Hebrew host, are no less applicable to us. Everything which leads the affections away from God is an idol, and betrays us into sin. If we serve God willingly and joyfully, preferring His service to the service of sin and Satan; if we choose Him, openly and boldly turning from all the attractions and vanities of the world, we shall enjoy His blessing in this life, and shall dwell forever in His presence in the future life.

“The Lord our God is a jealous God. He is just and holy. He will not be trifled with. He reads a deceptive heart. He abhors a double mind. He hates lukewarmness. We cannot serve God and mammon, for they are antagonistic.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 19, 1881.

- b. What did God want the Israelites to realize about their frailty? Joshua 24:16–20. Are we any different?
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“Before there could be any permanent reformation the people must be led to feel their utter inability in themselves to render obedience to God. . . . While they trusted in their own strength and righteousness, it was impossible for them to secure the pardon of their sins; they could not meet the claims of God’s perfect law, and it was in vain that they pledged themselves to serve God. It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon of sin and receive strength to obey God’s law. They must cease to rely upon their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Saviour, if they would be accepted of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 524.

5. REMARKABLE VICTORY

- a. What remarkable pledge did Israel make before Joshua in the sight of God? What was done as a memorial of this pledge? Joshua 24:21–27.
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- b. How was the closing period of Joshua's life filled with dedication to God? Joshua 24:29–31. How did the people react under reproof when their experience wavered? Judges 2:1–5.
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“No stain rested upon the holy character of Joshua. He was a wise leader. His life was wholly devoted to God. . . .

“Joshua was loved and respected by all Israel, and his death was much lamented by them.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 351, 352.

“[Judges 2:1, 2 quoted.] The people bowed before God in contrition and repentance. They offered sacrifice, and confessed to God and to one another. The sacrifices they offered would have been of no value if they had not shown true repentance. Their contrition was genuine. The grace of Christ wrought in their hearts as they confessed their sins and offered sacrifice, and God forgave them.

“The revival was genuine. It wrought a reformation among the people. They remained true to the covenant they had made. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen the great works of the Lord.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 1001.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. On what condition do the people of God enjoy His special protection?
2. What happens when a person is enticed into marriage with an unbeliever?
3. Why is it so difficult to reason with a person infatuated with an unbeliever?
4. How liable is human nature to slip into idolatry? Why?
5. What makes the era of Joshua's leadership outstanding in Israel's history?

First Sabbath Offerings



JANUARY 5
for the Zimbabwe West
Field's Headquarters
(See p. 4.)

FEBRUARY 2
for the Zambian Union
Mission Headquarters
(See p. 25.)



MARCH 2
for World Disaster Relief
(See p. 46.)

